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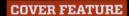


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# BIOSHOCKINFINITE We get skyhooked by this best-in-series sequel

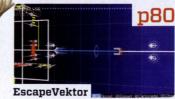


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#### **INSIDER**



IN YOUR FACE

#### Far Cry 3

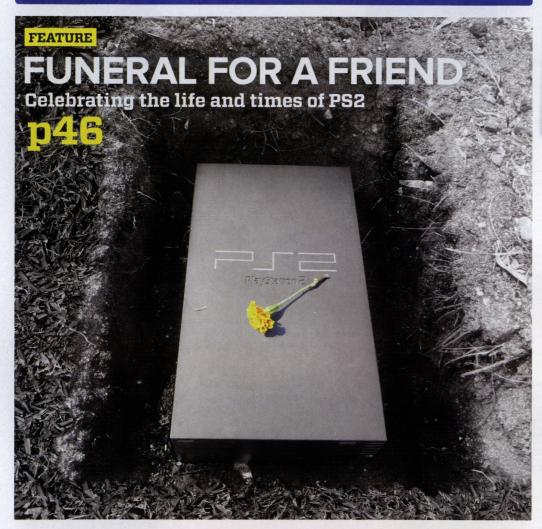
Was Far Cry 3's story any good? Tobes and Paul fight it out for your pleasure. **p26**.



#### OPINION

### A History of Violence

Videogames don't cause violence, but maybe they can help prevent it? **p24**.



# Play Station Official Magazine Australia Official Magazine Australia Play Play DITI BIOSHOCK INFINITE THE MAINING STOCK RECENT STOCK RECENT STOCK WINT THE WAIRING THE WAIRING

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#### Meet the team



Paul Taylor Deputy Editor

PlayStation Mobile games have been taking up my time, but I'm hungry for the PS3 bigguns.

Playing: Surge Wanting: The Last of Us



Stephanie Goh

#### Art Director

Playing Sleeping Dogs while eating pork buns. "Why don't you have a pork bun in your hand?"

Playing: Sleeping Dogs Wanting: BioShock Infinite



#### **Dan Staines**

#### Contributor

If you haven't already bought the Leviathan DLC for *Mass Effect 3* you're missing out. It's near essential.

Playing: Mass Effect 3
Wanting: BioShock Infinite



#### **James Cottee**

#### Contributor

So, THQ's assets are being auctioned off. I hope *Saints Row* finds a good home...

Playing: Retro City Rampage

Wanting: Dragon's Crown



#### **James Ellis**

#### Contributor

Unfortunately I've recently discovered Twitter and my productivity has bombed like a whoopie cushion at a funeral.

Playing: Split/Second Wanting: Crysis 3



#### **Nathan Lawrence**

#### Contributor

The greatest threat facing gamers today is rediscovering the addictiveness of *Skyrim*.

Playing: Skyrim
Wanting: BioShock Infinite



#### Dave Kozicki

#### Contributor

Is it wrong that I really, REALLY want Far Cry 4 to have Vaas and Christopher Mintz-Plasse as co-op buds? **Playing:** DmC

Wanting: Remember Me



#### Toby McCasker

#### Contributor

Did you see that *Cyberpunk* 2077 trailer thing? Laaawd. How I have waited for this day. Please come again.

Playing: Ni No Kuni Wanting: Cyberpunk 2077



#### Angry Sackboy Contributor

Are we absolutely sure this island in Far Cry 3 isn't New Zealand? Everyone on it is has a kiwi accent.

Playing: Far Cry 3 Wanting: GTA V

### **Editorial**



ell, we did it, comrade. We earned ourselves that R18+ for videogames. The first of many ultra-violent, adults-only titles are rolling towards Aussie stores as we speak. And thank God, too, because I was getting sick of reading about it.

Before we do let that great crusade pass into lexicon, only to resurface as a war story you'll tell your grand kids ("oh, it was horrible Billy, there were religious nuts and dickhead politicians

everywhere"), let me register one final complaint.

Why the hell should the honour of the first R18+ rated game in Australia (*Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge*) go to a Nintendo system instead of us, or even our allies-of-convenience over on Xbox? It's like we both fought our arses off to take Nazi held Berlin only to have Switzerland parachute in out of nowhere and tackle Hitler.

I'm no rabid fanboy when it comes to the big three consoles (though I have a *very* clear and obvious favourite), but it seems to me that the PlayStation brand has done much, much more to promote good old fashioned, reach-for-the-bucket violence than whatever Nintendo's last two rainbow-poopin' consoles ever did.

Did the Mario crowd bleed, as we did, when the conservatives fired the first shots and got *GTA San Andreas* recalled? No. Where were *they* when we blew the gaming horn of Gondor to rally against the banning of *Mortal Kombat*? Nowhere.

I'm not really that upset, of course. Truth be told I'm excited by the fact that we finally have all three console manufacturers together on the same page for once; united by adult games and poised to become allies for gaming's next great cause.

A XXX rating for videogames.

Who the hell is with me? What say you, my horny brethren?! It's going to take us *at least* another 10 years to get it through parliament. We may as well get that katamari rolling now...



#### **Adam Mathew**

Editor

**Playing:** Dead Space 3 (again) **Wanting:** GTA V

#### **SPEAK WITH US!**

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins a prize! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole yea round? Love? Wrong. A scratch and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotches? No. Please stop

The answer we were looking for is: an *OPS* subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via maric

**TURN TO PAGE 68** 

### PlayStation . Official Magazine - Australia

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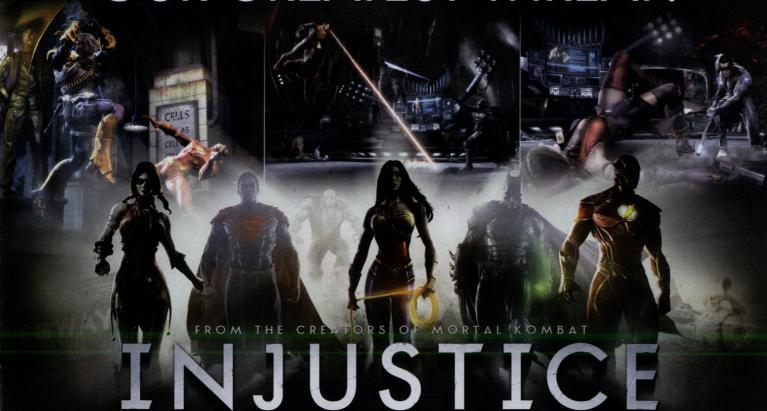
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# insider

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## **VIOLENCE AND**

Debate re-ignites after tragic school shooting

S President Barack Obama has proposed a \$10 million study to address the relationship between videogames, media images and gun violence in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Videogames became part of the tragedy after early reports claimed shooter Adam Lanza was addicted to violent videogames, prompting a discussion that involved leading game developers and US Vice President los Biden

Ironically the most outspoken critics of gaming as a determinant for the massacre have been the National Rifle Association (NRA), who then released their own first-person shooter on a mobile platform. Executive Vice President Wayne La Pierre described titles such as *Grand Theft Auto* and *Mortal Kombat* as the 'filthiest form of pornography'.

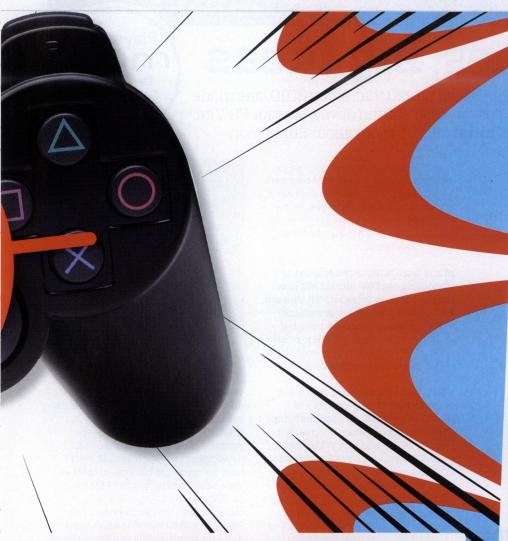
"There exists in this country a callous, corrupt and corrupting shadow industry that sells, and sows, violence against its own people," he said.

Comedian Stephen Colbert capitalised on Pierre's controversial speech, joking the cause of the violence "Has to be that America is the only country in the world that has videogames, we're the only country that has violent movies, and we're the only country with crazy people."

The nation maintains the highest gun ownership rate in the world at 89 guns for every 100 people with approximately 60 per cent of homicides caused by a firearm. Australia in comparison has 15 firearms for every 100 people and sees 11.5 per cent of its homicide deaths the result of guns.

Other institutions have been quick to point the finger at the videogame industry. A community

Issue 79 March 2013



### **VIDEOGAMES**

organisation based in Connecticut in the United States recently withdrew a trade program where people could swap their violent games for gift certificates. Its aim was to "Promote discussion of violent videogames and media with children and with the families at the home," said spokesman Dick Fortunato in an interview with gaming website Polygon.

We spoke to ex-2K producer Bryan Ma about why violence is so prevalent in the medium. "Violence is easy to simulate and attach goals to," he said. "Physical conflict is an easy conflict for narrative... looking for non-violent games generally means you'll be looking at stuff that is trying harder to explore uncharted territory."

Some game studios have explored

such territory successfully. Quantic Dream founder David Cage, responsible for the PlayStation hit *Heavy Rain*, adamantly maintains his games won't glorify violence. "Whatever is possible with interactive entertainment should be explored, and I don't think we're seeing that right now. The industry is too far balanced towards kids and strangers. It's too focused on violence," he said.

Meanwhile Thatgamecompany, makers of the PlayStation exclusive titles *Journey* and *Flower*, focus on giving gamers an emotional experience without the violence. Indeed the company's mission statement reads "Create timeless entertainment that makes positive changes to the human psyche worldwide." Sounds good to us.

Martin Gladstone

#### In Short

A brief look at this month's news

PlayStation 4

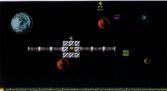
- According to an analyst at Baird Equity Research PlayStation 4 will be released in October this year and will cost approximately \$400. This same analyst also warns that there may be "early production issues" with the PS4 but is unwilling (or unable) to specify what they might be. Our guess? He's making shit up.
- THQ is no more. At time of going to print the publisher has sold most of its internal studios and projects to other videogame developers and publishers (all figures are in US\$). Relic, the makers of the Warhammer 40,000 strategy games, goes to SEGA for \$26.6 mil. Koch Media (who owns Deep Silver, maker of Dead Island) has bought Volition for \$22.3 mil, and the Metro franchise for \$5.8 mil. Take 2 will buy Turtle Rock's title Evolve for \$10.8 mil. Ubisoft now has another studio in Canada, buying THQ Montreal for \$2.5 mil, and South Park: The Stick of Truth for just over \$3.2 million. Crytek has snapped up the Homefront franchise for \$500,000. Weirdly, sadly, no-one put a bid in for Vigil, makers of Darksiders.
- Sony has sold an estimated 77 million PlayStation 3s worldwide, besting Microsoft's Xbox 360 by more than a million units
- Metal Gear maestro Hideo Kojima did not want Raiden to star in Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance, and had instead intended to make Gray Fox (aka Frank Jaeger) the game's protagonist. "It was my staff in Kojima Productions that insisted on Raiden, and I respected their idea," said the designer in a recent interview with gaming website IGN.
- ▶ Oddworld developer Just Add Water wants your help deciding which game to make next. A poll posted on the developer's site asks "Which game would you like to see after [we finish Abe's Oddysee remake] New 'n' Tasty?" and goes on to list a number of intriguing possibilities, including Stranger's Wrath II, Munch's Exoddus, and Abe's Exoddus HD the latter being the current front-runner with 26 per cent of the vote.
- ➤ Epic Mickey 2 has not been an epic sales success, shifting a measly 270,000 units across all platforms in its first month on sale in America. For comparison's sake, the first Epic Mickey a Wii exclusive sold in excess of 1.3 million units during the same time frame.
- ▶ It seems that a television show based on Fallout may be in the works. Why else would Bethesda Softworks register a trademark for "an on-going television program set in a post-nuclear world"? Unless, of course, they're planning to make a TV show about Rage...
- In a heart-warming display of developer solidarity, 
  Devil May Cry director Hideki Kamiya has 
  expressed support for the recent reboot.

  "DmC is a very unique title, and I honestly hope that 
  people enjoy it," he tweeted recently to which 
  DmC developer Ninja Theory replied "Thank you 
  for your kind words. We are of course huge fans of 
  your work and can't wait to play Metal Gear Rising." 
  Awwww! How nice!



#### INTERVIEW









## Small games, big ideas

A team of three make up a London-based studio that, since 2010, has made 14 games for various platforms. They've also started developing for PS Vita. Creative Director Richard Hill-Whittal tells us more about Super Icon.



#### Tell us about yourself and your team: who are you and what type of games do you make?

RHW: We are a new studio based in London, UK, developing and self-publishing our own titles. We're working across a few genres at the moment, which has been great fun. Our current/recent games include a 2D platformer (Life of Pixel) and a 2D SHMUP (MegaBlast) for PSM and until recently two Vita native 3D games (a pub/bar games collection and a race game with track creation/sharing).

#### Why did you pick PlayStation Mobile as a platform to make games for?

RHW: We were chatting to Sony Europe about Vita stuff, and they asked if we'd like to join the PSM Beta. It seemed a logical progression after PSP Minis, and Sony were very supportive and keen to work with developers on their new platform.

What's the biggest surprise in making a PlayStation game that works across multiple platforms?

"It seemed a logical progression, and Sony were very supportive "

RHW: Certainly the biggest surprise for me was how smoothly the PSM titles run on all the platforms. You don't even need to worry about separate controls as the touch screen devices have built in virtual Playstation buttons. It really couldn't be better in that respect.

Minis were originally designed to invigorate the PSP market but now they're made to work on PSP, Vita and PS3. Is that a benefit or drawback? RHW: Definitely a benefit. We had a few issues with PS3 compatibility, due to problems with the PSP emulation, but it opened up the market a lot so that was great for us.

What about for the guys who want to make PlayStation games - is PlayStation Mobile a good first step? RHW: Playstation Mobile is a great first step. My advice would be to start simple, use the Sony examples (we used the Sony 2D library for both of our titles). If you are doing a tile based game get support for a good tile editor in there at the early stages (we used the "Tiled" map editor). Also make sure you download the royalty free sound effects Sony have supplied as part of the PSM developer program. Very useful indeed, and a nice touch from Sony.



#### What's your next game going to be, and why will it be the best PS Mobile or minis - title yet?

RHW: Well it has been a strange few months - we had two PlayStation Vita native titles in development, but don't have the resources currently to continue. We would like to do another PSM title, currently we're mulling over a few concepts. Also we plan to revisit Life of Pixel with a 16-bit themed sequel. We're also working on our first update for Life of Pixel which should be ready in a couple of weeks or so. 4



#### 2006 >

Starcraft: Ghost was still on our horizons in our massive 'Best Games of 2006' feature, and we were still



about it saying it "looked great when we played it three years ago." It was going to be a busy year, with more than 50 games to be released on PS2, 11 on PSP and 10 on PS3. Meanwhile, the chins and fanstacular Black scored a 9 ("light on story and heavy on action, delivering wave after wave of shuddering wargasms.")

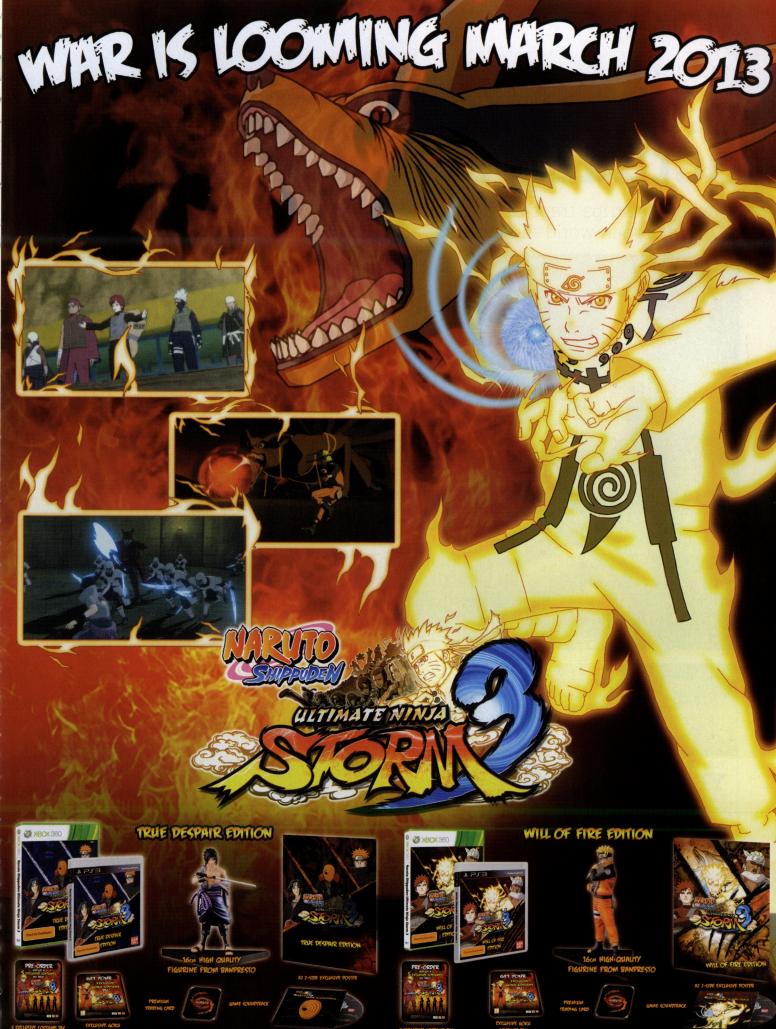
#### 2012

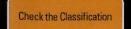
This was the PS Vita's debut, and it certainly left its mark with a stack of great games. Uncharted: Golden Abyss proved

that you



could have a big screen game on the go. Elsewhere, it was a muted issue for reviews, with Final Fantasy XIII-2, the great but financially ruptured Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning, The Darkness II and more. Disappointingly, Starcraft: Ghost did not feature at all.





















Cyber Connect2 Games



IN YOUR FACE

# Was Far Cry 3's story actually any good?

Amongst the trips, traps, animals and firearms, we figure out if Ubisoft's open-world shooter had a solid narrative.





YES
Toby reads a lot of books

Toby reads a lot of books but has trouble focusing, so please put his books in his games okay.

aul and I both interviewed Far Cry 3's lead writer Jeffrey Yohalem last year, but from very different perspectives: Paul as a bumbling gamer-oaf, myself as a sometimes-author (I have a book out soon, please buy it). During the course of my time with the guy, we spoke little of Far Cry 3 itself and much more about the art of fiction. Jeffrey should be writing books, not game narratives. He's an impassioned and intuitive quill struggling with relaying the nuance inside his head within the confines of a platform the demanding and broad accessibility of which can't often allow for the power of a novel's suggestion. His story is brilliant, make no mistake. The subtleties that make it what should be are there, but will be lost - or worse, as they have often been, completely misinterpreted in much the

same way as Casey Hudson's sudden surrealist about-turn finale for Mass Effect 3 — on 99% of everyone because: this is a shooter. Far Cry 3's genre is not rocket science, but its narrative thrust is. Therein lies the disconnect that has sawn Yohalem's ambition from its revelation. I know exactly what he wanted to say and how he wanted every gamer to feel while they played. In this he didn't succeed, but in a much more important way he did: gaming needs this. Gaming is a billion dollar industry and has been for some time, but for all those self-congratulatory statistics claiming the age of the average gamer is 30+ and counting, it still has yet to match its cerebellum to its body. The rise of multiplayer and the fall of single player has devalued the fiction of games in the eyes of many developers, but every time an effort like Yohalem's is blindly maligned rather than absorbed with considered thought, we move closer to an always-on dystopia of "ur ghey." No thanks.

oby and I both interviewed Jeffrey Yohalem, Far Cry 3's lead writer, well before the release date of the stellar shooter-cumaction-adventure game (it's really good, you should buy it). Toby interviewed Yohalem as a twitchy, wild-eyed loner looking to leverage his status in the media as a means to his own end, and I as a servant to you, the reader. I'll tell you now, Jeffrey Yohalem knows what he wants from a story, and knows what he wants it to do. But it doesn't work in this game. He said to me at the time that "the story in other games is not about holding a gun. Our game is about that, and we're exploring every side of that. We're dealing with it metaphorically, psychologically." He also said that "the gun will transform who



Paul Taylor

Paul's onto his third playthrough of Far Cry 3, content to toy with pirates by swooping off towers with a wingsuit.

transform who the player is." Yes, the gun succeeded in transforming Jason from nervous white boy to adopted warrior, but so did the tattoos, drugs, and skinning animals to make a bigger wallet. I don't think it transformed the player, not least because the story makes a few huge turns roughly halfway in just before Jason lands on the second island, and then again roughly three-quarters of the way in. In an interview with *Penny Arcade*, Yohalem says that we're seeing the story through Jason's eyes, and his parts of his point of view can be considered fantasy. It's a shame Yohalem needed to explain that. Like Toby said, the nuances are lost somewhat, and for me – and a lot of people – it's the broad strokes, the stuff you do when you're not playing a dedicated story missions that makes the best tales.

Want to hear more of the *OPS* team disagreeing with each other? Check out our Podcast available on side B of our cover disc. Want to get into a great debate with one of us, or a fellow reader? Hop onto www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia and make your case. The best topics may find their way into the magazine.



#### isn't an option, so if you get rustled you'll have to shoot your way out. Thanks to QV Software we have 10 prize packs to give away, comprised of a

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2 T-shirt, poster, as well as a copy of the game. This is an exclusive prize pack that you simply cannot buy!

As well as a challenging single player campaign where you'll have to factor in distance, wind resistance, and bullet drop when planning your shot, Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2 also features a multiplayer mode, all factored around the authentic sniping experience. Technologically advanced, this is a game to set your sights on.

To win one of these awesome packs, simply answer the following question and follow the entry instructions:

#### A sniper's tool of the trade is a:

A: spoon B: sandwich C: sniper rifle

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2 will be available in stores March 15.

#### **Entry Instructions**

To enter this Official PlayStation Magazine -Australia competition email your entries to ops@ citrusmedia.com.au with 'Sniper 2 comp' ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002. Please include your name, age and address with your answer. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 26/03/2013. Winners will be notified by mail.



### Around the World

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in tech and gaming



#### THAT WINNING SMELL

#### CALIFORNIA, USA

Ever wondered what a Bugatti Veyron smelt like in Need for Speed: Most Wanted after a burnout? How about the stench of Kratos' sweat-soaked man dress? Sensory Acumen's GameSkunk could be delivering such delightful scents to your gaming console in the not too distant future. The technology may also be used in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder, providing support in the battle against unpleasant memories. GameSkunk can supposedly recreate over 30,000 different smells, most being entirely childfriendly. (Or not.)



#### 4K IS A-OK

#### LAS VEGAS, USA

Ultra High definition gaming is (nearly) upon us as 4K televisions dominated the Consumer **Electronics Show** (CES) earlier this year. Displaying four times the resolution of a Full HD TV these beasts also boast prices rocketing into five figures. One such offering from Samsung, an 85" behemoth, comes with a \$40,000 price tag. Only 77 units were available to preorder with the company also showing off 95' and 110" models on the CES show floor. Don't go rushing out to get one yet though, aside from tech demos there's not much content at all.



#### HUDS UP

#### CONNECTICUT, USA

Audio and infotainment equipment company Harman has created an augmented reality display for your car's windshield. Working like Google's glass technology, the HUD is touch free, instead controlled by user voice and gestures. The display contains email, Facebook and real-time weather data, but will be most useful for augmented navigation, recreating GPS systems popularised by games such as GTA and Sleeping Dogs. Who said life couldn't mimic games? Now all we need is a portal gun, a Mass Effect singularity device and Isaac Clarke's ripper.



#### HELPING YOU PILL OUT

#### **∺**CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND

Data pills were recently used in a trial by 50 firefighters in Victoria, and were designed to monitor the body's response to heat stress. Because heat stress causes unconsciousness and cardiac arrest the pills transmit vital information including skin temperature, heart and respiration rate. If any of these reach dangerous levels the firefighter is prompted to take a 'cool down' break which could be indispensable in their war against fire. Can't think of anyone who deserves such a thing more - except maybe Dovahkiin. And that bloke from The Fantastic Four



#### PORTABLE POWER

#### HAMPSHIRE. ENGLAND.

Pack your PS Vita bag with a Powermonkey charger when holidaying, because if you ever get stuck on a deserted island this contraption can keep your portable baby from running out of juice. Using solar power technology the Powermonkey takes 15 hours to fully recharge in optimal sunlight. If it just so happens it gets snatched by a passing shark you may be in luck - it's also waterproof for 30 mins up to a depth of 1 metre. Though we'd imagine you'd have a hard time catching said shark, unless you bring out those improbable Far Cryskills.

#### INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

#### O EUROPE



- Call of Duty: Black Ops II
- 2 FIFA 13 Electronic Arts
- Far Cry 3 Ubisoft 3
- Need for Speed: Most Wanted
- **Assassins Creed III** Ubisoft

#### JAPAN

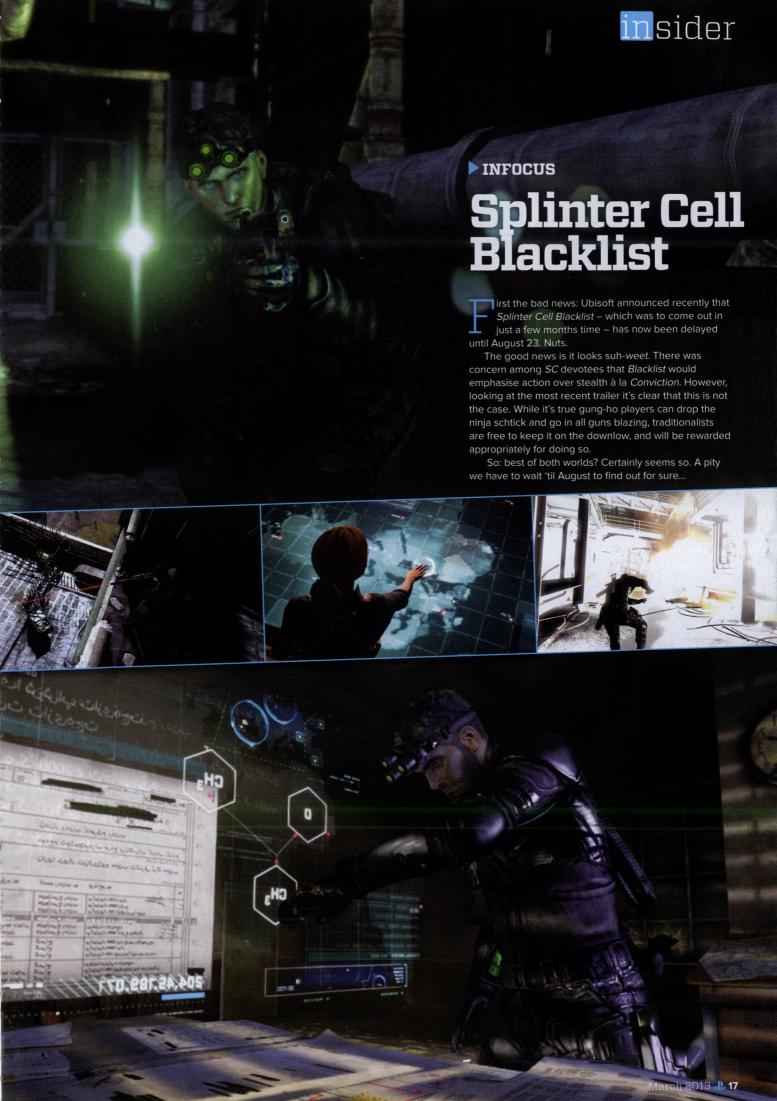


- One Piece: Romance Dawn, Bouken no Yoake Namco Bandai
- Fist of the North Star: Ken's Rage 2 Tecmo Koei
- 3 Yakuza 5 SEGA
- Hot Shots Golf: World Invitational Sony Computer Entertainment
- Call of Duty: Black Ops II Square Enix





- Call of Duty: Black Ops II
- 2 Assassin's Creed III Ubisoft
- 3 NBA 2K13
  - Take-Two Interactive
- 4 Madden NFL 13 Electronic Arts
- Far Cry 3 Ubisoft 5



# In their words

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"Why go first, when your competitors can look at your specifications and come up with something better?"

Kazuo "Kaz" Hirai, Sony CEO, on letting Microsoft release details about their next-gen console first.



"We are in the peak of [violence in entertainment]. Video game violence? Unprecedented. I'm not saying he [President Obama] wants to censor this, I think he should sensitize people that they should protect their children, family by family, from these kinds of electronic child molesters." Ralph Nader, former US presidential candidate, gently infers video games to pedophilia.



"I let [Bethesda] know that fans were clamouring, trying to figure out if there's any chance that Three Dog would be back sometime. And, you know, they let it slip that it looks like Three Dog will. And they said that maybe you could tell your fans. I don't think they even anticipated it would explode like this."

**Erik Todd Dellums**, *Fallout 3* voice actor, on the possibility of *Fallout 4*.



OPS: It's been roughly 26 years since Aliens was released. What's the appeal for wanting to make a game based on that movie? What do you want to achieve by making Colonial Marines?

BB: What isn't appealing? Having the opportunity to work in a universe that has affected so many people and so many genres of entertainment is truly exciting. It also helps that Aliens had some of the best characters, creatures and weapons you could hope for when creating a first person shooter. Pulse Rifles, Smartguns, Xenomorph soldiers, facehuggers, and one massive Queen.

# OPS: Both Borderlands and Borderlands 2 have been released in the time that A:CM was first announced. What's been the hold-up?

**BB:** The game was announced way before full production began on the project. Typically you don't do that, but a lot of people got excited and couldn't help themselves. Full production on the project started late 2010. Prior to that there was a lot of pre-production and prototyping with a smaller team while *Borderlands* was in full production.

OPS: Let's face it: fans can be insanely possessive when it comes to games that

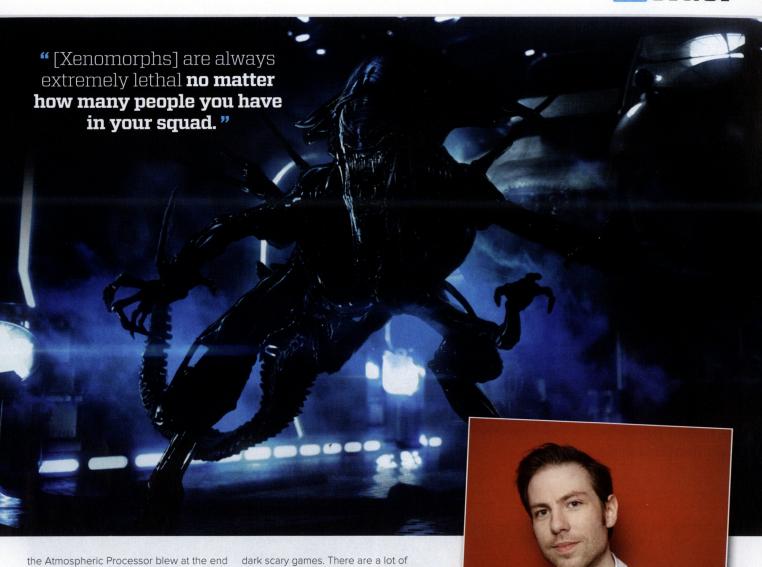
#### use iconic film licences. How do you negate a backlash like this? Do you care, or is it worth caring about?

BB: Fans certainly can be, but it's not something to fight against. At the end of the day you see that it stems from the fact that they care. What you do is listen. A lot of community fans actually helped nudge us in better directions and in some cases directly contributed to making sure A:CM is as canonical as possible. One of the guys who we met online, Sean Maio, recreated a Smartgun from authentic source parts. A freakin Smartgun! That's dedication. So, we had been struggling for a while to animate the movement of the Smartgun and when we saw Sean with his Smartgun, I arranged for him to fly out to Dallas and we mo'capped him! When you play the game and see someone running around with a Smartgun, that's Sean.

# OPS: We saw a new alien species leap out at us at the end of level 4. How do you explain the existence of a new species when fans know there's only a couple of types of aliens from the movie?

BB: That actually isn't a new species of Alien you were teased by. I don't want to spoil anything, but that Xeno is actually one you see very briefly in Aliens. If you are a hardcore fan you'll know what I'm talking about. That next mission is pretty awesome because it dives into what happened to the Xenos at Hadley's Hope after





For the other types of Xenos, they all have a role in the hive like bees or termites, but that isn't where we start. We always ask ourselves "What does it add to gameplay?" and then we figure out how it could make sense in the hive hierarchy. That said, we really didn't stray very far.

OPS: We know you've talked with Syd Mead: who else (apart from the voice cast/actors) have you spoken with while you were making Colonial Marines?

BB: Brian Martel, one of the owners of Gearbox had a meeting with Ridley Scott just prior to us signing A:CM. This was also prior to even *Prometheus*. Brian and Ridley discussed all manner of things but the part that got them both excited the most was revisiting the Alien universe. Brian got the inside scoop on what Ridley's vision was and we took it from there. We aren't quite sure but it's nice to think that conversation was the seed that started Prometheus.

OPS: Inside the colony on LV426 we're looking at either gunmetal panels or lots of dark alien goop sticking people to the walls. How do you use colour or lighting to keep the world interesting?

BB: Visual fatigue is something you have to be careful with when you work with

tricks we use to make sure that players don't get tired. Key lights are almost never static in A:CM. There is always something happening to them, whether it's a florescent light flicker with its colour changing as the light warms up and cools down, or the atmospherics in the scene are drifting through the lit areas. Colour of lights, tone mapping of spaces, and how they are composed in a scene convey information to the player that is useful. If you pay attention, there are visual cues everywhere for where Xenos could come from, or tricks to trap players into false senses of security. Lighting in A:CM serves the gameplay.

OPS: We noticed that we could pick the sentry gun back up after a firefight. Is the gun a tool that can be placed anywhere in a level? How much freedom does the player have with using this?

BB: When the player comes across a Sentry Gun in A:CM they can pick it up and move it whereever they wish to strategically defend against the Xenomorphs. Since the Xenos aren't dumb, they will quickly stop running into the Sentry Gun's bullets. When that happens, it's best to move it someplace more useful. Just like in the film the Sentry Guns don't have infinite ammo, so use them wisely.

**OPS: Tension was pretty high** during our solo play-through. How do you keep this up with co-op? Does it affect the tone or feeling of being overwhelmed by a murderous species compared to playing solo? BB: The single player experience changes

quite a bit in co-op. Xenos are always extremely lethal no matter how many people you have in your squad. When you work as a squad and use your tools, like the Motion Tracker or Sentry Gun, the depth of the experience is increased. You will feel like an ultimate bad-ass. However, Xenos also get smarter, so you'll need to stay frosty! 4



#### TOP TEN

### **EASTER EGGS OF 2012**

Easter Eggs are typically a sign of great respect between developers, an insight into the media the developers were consuming when they made the game, a look back at the past, or an indication that long hours drove the developers insane. 2012's best Easter Eggs run the full spectrum.



#### Mists of Borderlandia

Borderlands 2 was filled with incredible Easter Eggs, but we can't go past this uniquely Aussie reference. This stencil of Wastelander Panda is a hattip to a team of local filmmakers who impressed Gearbox with their work on the yet-to-be-released video series.



#### Nuketown 1982

Shoot all the heads off the mannequins in *Black Ops II's* Nuketown 2025 fast enough and you're given the chance to play through some old-skool Activision classics. Playing *Pitfall* makes more sense than playing *Zork* on a controller in *Black Ops 1*.



#### The Journey Never Ends

Make sure you take a gander through every telescope you find in minimalist title *The Unfinished Swan*. Near the end, you'll encounter one that zooms in on a lovely little tableau of two wanderers in *Journey*. Too charming for words.



#### We All Scream For Ice Cream

See the vultures in *Hitman*Absolution's 'End of the Road'
mission? Startle them and then
shoot them all in the air. An ice
cream truck comes barrelling
through, putting Lenny – wait for it
– on ice. Get it? Ice?



#### Save It For The Blooper Reel

Replaying *Uncharted: Golden Abyss* on Crushing doesn't just up the difficulty – it also adds a blooper scene into Chapter 31, where a certain dead explorer jumps up and gives Chase's 'actress' a fright. Fourth wall: broken.



#### Borrowing From A Thief

Sneak around *Dishonored's*Flooded District, and you may well stumble across an apprentice assassin being trained. The dialog of the trainer is, more or less, lifted from the tutorial from *Thief: The Dark Project*. Ahhh. *Thief*.



#### **Get Over Here!**

Mortal Kombat on Vita didn't make it into Australian homes, but if you were naughty and imported it, the characters from the game did.

Go to practice, hit (a), then hold (b) and (c) while selecting a level. Hey presto, it's MK, in your house, in real life, and augmented reality!



#### I Did Nawht Hit Her

Climb the right ladder in Lansdale Street in the okay-ish Silent Hill: Downpour and you'll find yourself in the room that hapless Henry Townshend was trapped in during Silent Hill 4: The Room. We guess Henry never knew about that ladder, then?



#### ...Men Becoming Wolves

At the start of Far Cry 3's 'Home Delivered' side-mission, there's a neat little Easter Egg for 30 Rock fans. 'There's this pool, supposed to be sacred,' says the quest holder. 'Ruins at the bottom, spooky scary stuff, like a Werewolf Bar Mitzvah.'



#### Assassin's Beak

We dig any game that asks us to input the Konami Code, even if it doesn't quite work on a DualShock. Head to the homestead, press up against a wall and use your whistle to summon a turkey, then enter  $\uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \leftarrow \rightarrow \leftarrow \rightarrow \bigcirc$  and  $\bigcirc$  Bam! Assassin turkey!





#### IN REALITY

### Odds of surviving a Big Cat attack

hen we saw the recent film adaptation of *Life of Pi*, we couldn't help but sympathise with the lad when he was trapped on the boat with a tiger. We spent the tail end of 2012 being mauled by cougars in *Assassin's Creed III*, getting taken down by the Golden Tiger in *Far Cry 3*, and losing our Pomeranian mates to all kinds of cats in *Tokyo Jungle*. These games treat big cat attacks as the potentially serious encounters that they are, but may

also exaggerate how easy it is to

fight one off.

Tiger attacks are a lot rarer these days than they used to be, largely because people are better at avoiding being attacked altogether, but when a big cat means business it often gets the job done. The tiger labelled the 'Man-eater of Calcutta', for instance, claimed over 200 human lives before it was captured in 1903. In fact, there were quite a few reports of tigers with legendary kill rates back then - unable to hunt natural prey because of broken teeth, the 'Champawat Tiger' killed an incredible 436 people in India until it was hunted down in 1907.

It would be more realistic if Jason got through his encounters with the numerous cats that beset him throughout *Far Cry 3* by simply standing his ground and making a lot of noise. If it weren't for his guns, Jason would be in a fair amount of danger from the

Just squirt it a few times with a water pistol – cats hate that

various man-eating big cats scattered around - they especially like to attack people who are alone - but the island is also filled with other prey, which to the game's credit the cats tend to prefer (cats only go after humans if they have no other choice). Once an up-close attack actually starts there's not much you can do beyond shielding yourself and clobbering them in the face in the hope of doing some real damage. Even being bitten or scratched once is enough to do permanent damage, but then Jason is being shot constantly as well with no long term effect.

In any case, big cat attacks never make for easy fights. Perhaps *Tokyo Jungle*'s one-hit kill system is the most accurate depiction of what real animal attacks are like (although those little dogs are a tad more powerful than they would be in reality). On the other hand, these game characters suffer through more big cat attacks during the game than the rest of the world does during the entire year - in 2012, bigcatrescue.org charted 19 worldwide incidents in which big cats caused trouble by escaping from enclosures, mauling or killing humans. But then, since 1990, no incidents have been reported outside of the mainland continents - we suppose if there really was some sort of Far Cry-esque situation unfolding in the Pacific Islands, we'd likely not hear about it. . James O'Connor

#### What Happens In Vegas...

In October 2003, the stage performance career of Siegfried and Roy was ended when their seven year old tiger, Montecore, bit Roy on the neck during an act. There's some debate over what prompted the lion to do so - it seems likely that the tiger believed Rov was in danger for some reason and tried to pick him up by the neck, like a cub. We're expecting a similar dynamic if Team Ico ever finishes The Last Guardian...

#### NUMBER CRUNCHING

# 30,00+ Number of Trophies you'll need to reach the level cap of 100 on the worldwide

Number of Trophies you'll need to reach the level cap of 100 on the worldwide PSN leaderboards. Only two people have managed it so far: BIELERIC with 33,334 and Pockidrive with 32.636.

# 1.1 billion

▲ Amount (in US dollars) Sony made selling its iconic US headquarters on Maddison Ave in New York City. The sale is reported to boost the company's operating income by \$685 million.

### Separated at Birth

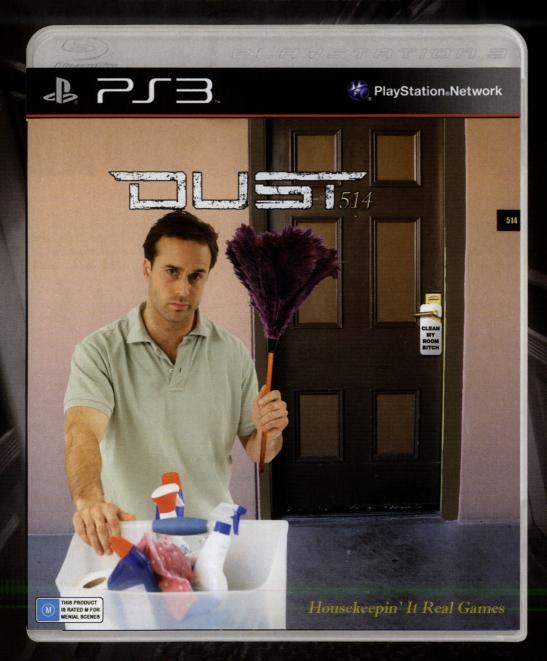
**NO. 49** *GTA IV*'s Niko and *Behind Enemy Lines*' Vladimir Mashkov



One is an eastern European veteran in pursuit of the American Dream, escaping a life of violence for one with more violence. The other is the right hand man for a Bosnian leader, previously in a prison camp and sporting a blue Adidas jacket. Both have heavy accents and extensive experience in executions because every eastern European has seemingly killed someone at some point in their lives.



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13.11.13



### A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Just because videogames aren't part of the problem doesn't mean they can't be part of the solution.

lioarchaeological research has shown that interpersonal violence has been common throughout the entire history of our species. Human violence is an inexorable aspect of human society and culture. The archaeological record clearly indicates that this has always been true. Cannibalism, mass killings, homicides, and assault injuries are exceedingly well documented in both the ancient and modern worlds.

The people we share our DNA with have been clubbing, stabbing, and scooping each other's brains out with admittedly alarming regularity throughout all of history. Today's tools may be deadlier, but our humans aren't.

That the US video game industry elected to meet with Vice President Joe Biden as US lawmakers scramble to do something – anything – about the

country's devastating gun violence problem is hardly surprising, I guess. After years of being blamed for turning Americans into killers (mostly by people

who see no harm in letting any moron who can put one foot in front of the other buy a military-grade firearm) the opportunity to speak to somebody who mattered was likely an attractive one.

The problem, of course, is that by accepting an invitation to speak to the VP about what the games industry can do about gun violence, the industry is associating itself with gun violence. Does making the games industry a part of the solution mean it's a part of the problem?

Perhaps. Perhaps not. Either way, video gaming has an image problem.

I don't believe that game violence is the root of real world violence. It's not just an absurd position to adopt; it's an offensive one. That some people are willing to waste so much time rallying against a world of make-believe in the childlike belief that nerfing violent videogames will be the silver bullet that puts a stop to gun-toting crazies is nothing short of ludicrous. These people need some air holes poked into their skulls, because the magical fairies that run the show in there are running out

of oxygen. It's not just offensive to an entire industry of creative professionals, or a world of regular, lawabiding consumers, but to the people out there every day campaigning for the kinds of social changes that are far more likely to make a difference. Improvements to mental health. Prioritising education. Advocates for more responsible gun laws.

I do, however, believe that it could do a lot more to prevent it. Or at least, try to prevent it. The use of violence is the core completion mechanic for a vast number of today's most popular games. There's little choice in the matter; you just have to participate in the violence to proceed.

It's not every game, mind you. *Dishonored* is a recent example of a title that allowed players to reach the end of the game without killing a single soul. This makes every act of violence in *Dishonored* a

personal choice. Perhaps more games should do this. Perhaps players ought to be allowed to kill less rather than encouraged to kill more. Perhaps developers

should factor in these kinds of possibilities during development. Perhaps the more realistic our games get the more sobering the violence should be.

I recall being disturbed somewhat by the wounded cops in the original Kane & Lynch: Dead Men. I noted that, while writhing around on the ground, a female cop would often gasp that she had a daughter. Unfortunately, the game's logic meant there was no other way to deal with these cops other than shoot them. Would better Al allow us to simply suppress

opponents that players would prefer not to kill long enough for them to escape? Would giving the players greater freedom allow them to play potentially violent action games in a lessconfrontational manner?

All too often gamers, the games industry and the games press get blinded by the fear of censorship to such an extent that we all miss the fact that we have an opportunity to find cool and creative ways to be a part of a solution. We need more games that challenge us, and force us to think about our actions, and developers need to make them.

"Perhaps players ought to be allowed to kill less rather than encouraged to kill more."



who hates this topic.







**OPINION** 

# ENTER A NEW CHALLENGER

In the brawl for next gen, who's gonna win - or is there even a fight at all?

ext gen has a new fighter. In between smart phones, tablets, the PS4, Wii U (technically, sort of) and whatever the hell Microsoft are doing, Valve's Steam Box comes swaggering in from out of the internet rumours and hearsay. It might even dissolve the term 'next gen' completely.

Haven't heard of it? Gabe Newell revealed the concept roughly a month ago at the Consumer Electronic's Show in Las Vegas. While the Portal 2 creators will develop its own line of hardware, some of the production is being done by third parties, with multiple specs of the box available depending on your budget. The ultimate goal is to have a low-cost PC that connects to Valve's online store, Steam, to buy its often dirt-cheap games from there. It's also upgradeable, meaning if you want to improve the RAM or even the motherboard, you can get your screwdriver and go for it.

So what of 'next gen'? Should Sony be worried? Should you?

The Steam Box effectively says there is no one singular 'next gen'

or at least no monumental leaps in processing power or raw grunt like there normally is between launches of boxes that sit below your TV. Instead, it's all iterations. Smartphones have been doing it for a while, albeit enclosed in one unit and – unless you have pockets deeper than Bruce Wayne – two-year contracts.

On one hand its exciting – any new hardware is. But the concept is flawed, and it's because of one of the reasons that people wrongly think that mobiles are going to take over consoles: fragmentation. Hardware that can be built upon, allowing for iteration as rapid as mobile phones, leads to a fragmented user base, which is the same problem that the Android system has at the moment. There's not going to be one common spec for devs to work towards while punters have many possible configurations of hardware available.

As for owning one, how often are you going to have to upgrade? And at what cost? Are you going to be locked in to buying parts from the same manufacturer, or will there be a 'Steam

box' template common to all types?
Meanwhile, in console-land,
everyone's running on the same gear.
Everyone has the same restrictions
and freedom, the ease of turning it

"In console land I don't need to go hunting for drivers. I can lend my games to my friends, and I can borrow theirs"

on and knowing that it's just going to work bar the occasional update. I like consoles for this. I don't need to build it. I don't need to go hunting for and updating drivers, or be bothered by conflicting video cards, alwayson DRM because devs don't want pirates stealing their games, or files not installing properly. I can lend my games to my friends, and I can borrow theirs.

Like James Cottee wrote last month, competition is healthy. More of it please, because it makes everyone work hard. But you're going to struggle with this one Valve. See you round, like an Orbis.



Paul Taylor

Pressing buttons once and watching whatever they turn on immediately come to life pleases Paul Taylor.



# GIVING HOPE

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#### TROPHIES

Hey OPS,

I'm a trophy collector. I love the ring of a trophy after a hard level grind, or the 'bling' you get after collecting 6,000 collectables.

But the thing that annoys me most about them are online trophies.

Recently, the servers for Motorstorm: Pacific Rift and Ghostbusters: The Video Game were closed down. In the circumstances of Ghostbusters, very little notice was given. It is a game I will never be able to platinum. Yet the game continues to be sold.

The issue I have here is that when games decide to give online trophies, you're giving the game a lifespan. One day the *GTA IV* servers will close and that platinum trophy will be unattainable.

Same can be said for Killzone 2, Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood and Call of Duty: Black Ops and a torrent of other games (especially if they involve an EA franchise).

Why can't a game have trophies for offline, and a rewards system for online? That way no one misses out. **Russell Hamley**, via email

There's some merit to this, especially for games that primarily have a single-

player focus, but what about games that are made entirely for online play? When you say 'rewards system', do you want something that isnt trophies? With that in mind, should MAG, or the upcoming Dust 514, not have trophies at all? Or do you give two trophy lists, and depending on the game have two platinums? It's doubtful something like this could happen, as the structure of trophies and the way they're embedded into the system as a whole is pretty set.

The office is split on this. Some of us are content to go as far as we can in the single player side of a game and just let the multiplayer side of things rot, while others see it as an itch they just have to scratch, sometimes playing something they're not that into just to get the full lot. Seems like you fall into the second camp, and we're about to give you a game that's going to require some online play to get the Plat.

Congratulations, and yet sorry, at the same time.

#### **BOMBS AWAY**

Hello OPS,

I would like to say you guys are totally awesome at helping pick the right games. I found that *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* is the hardest game ever as i can't get past the fricken

second level. I keep trying but i just can't snipe. Plus *Assassins Creed III* was such a wicked game, it made up for *Revelations*. P.S. Sackboy will always be an awesome mascot with average games.

Nathan Hedley, via email

Hey, hey, woah there. You started out just fine, then dropped a bomb on us at the end that could level a city. Sounds like you're trying to serve Angry Sackboy, and that's social suicide.

First things first. Your problem with Medal of Honor: Warfighter is that you're playing Medal of Honor: Warfighter. Paul found that he had to fail that section roughly a dozen times before the game held his hand in pity and skipped merrily past it.

Yes, AC III was the bizness, and that's all we have to say about that.

In all seriousness, Sackboy's only starred in one so-so game (LittleBigPlanet Karting, which was neither bad nor great, just, well so-so) while the rest have been tip top. LittleBigPlanet 2 is one critical reason for owning a PS3, and PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale shines in multiplayer.

Still, we're happy you think he's a great mascot, and we do too.

#### PARENTS, TAKE NOTE

Hello OPS,

I hear parents complaining all too often about the violence in videogames. How they would never have allowed their young child (usually 7-13 years of age) to buy a particular game had they known the sheer amount of gore, violence and sexuality in it. This usually invokes a feeling of anger from me, as they soon proceed to claim that the industry is corrupting our children. I'm a young mum of two, soon to be three small children (under three), so I don't pretend to know what it's like to





Please note, not an official design, but something that Google spat out, Take with salt



deal with a moody and demanding preteen. But damn it, that's no excuse anymore! It's not like how it was when I was a child where a parents only option to find out the level of violence in a video game was to either play it themselves or sit and watch their child play it.

Parents cannot plead ignorance any longer and neither should gamers accept such excuses. The internet is easily accessed these days, with more than most having that access on hand at all times. We all have smart phones. tablets or computers at our disposal, finding out the content of a game is as simple as typing it into Google. If by some freakish chance you don't have one of those things there are TV shows dedicated to reviewing video games, there are magazines (such as this one) that review games and include still shots from games (usually combat shots). The government even changed the colouring of our classification system which CLEARLY outlines their recommendation for the age appropriateness of a game and gives a brief warning about the level of violence and other themes.

And, should all else fail, it is not hard to ask the store clerk in the gaming section about the game content. Most clerks that work in stores which distribute videogames tend of play these games themselves and would be more than happy to help answer any questions, that's what my mother used to do.

Parents are very quick to pass on the blame and videogames are an easy scapegoat, the media frequently touts the horrors of videogames. But the true blame lies with the parents, the industry self regulates to a certain extent. The rest is up to us.

I don't want the future of Australia's gaming industry to be at the mercy of lobbying parents and adults too lazy to type a few words into Google before buying a game for their child.

The next time you hear a complaint from parents crying ignorance about game content please remind them how easy it is to find out about game content and ratings, and that that excuse got old really fast and is no longer acceptable.

Stephanie Greenaway, via email

Nice one, Stephanie. There was a key line in your letter, "Parents cannot plead ignorance any longer and neither should gamers accept such excuses," which you're totally correct right about.

It still feels like gaming is something that's not understood by the majority of the population, depsite our switched-on readers, stats about the age of the 'average' gamer (32 and rising), and the billions and billions of dollars in revenue it generates every year. Perhaps what we really need is more people who play games to be in parliament, people who know that gaming is but a single thread in life's rich tapestry.

It brings up an interesing conundrum: would you gently tap someone on the shoulder and tell them in a friendly way they're buying a game that's way beyond their child's age group? Maybe the new R18+ classification will make people more aware? We'll be interested to see how this plays out.

#### **NEXT GEN**

Hey there OPS.

So, the next gen of consoles. It's coming, isn't it? The rumours (because that's all they are until Sony says 'hey here's the PlayStation 4') are streaming out thicker and faster than they were a year ago, and after six years of glorious gaming I'm still itching to get something new. Got a mad wish list too, and I saw some on your Facebook wall as well.

Some of those rumours are pretty wacky though, aren't they? A touch screen on the controller, like the Wii U, doesn't seem right, plus biometrics for measuring your pulse and stuff is out there. And, on the controller, replacing the DualShock?!

But what I really want is 4K gaming. 3D looks like it's dead in the water cause hardly anyone's really pushing it like they used to. I'm not really into photorealistic stuff, but an image that's crisper and clearer will immerse me more. E3's gonna rock. Sarah Mead, via email

Yep, you're right, they are just rumours until we hear more solid news. The rumblings we've heard point towards PC architecture so that games can be made faster (which makes sense) but a touch-screen controller does not float our boat. Firstly because the PS Vita could do that job, and secondly it feels like a gimmick to have it in the controller.

We also doubt that the DualShock is going to be ditched. That'd be like Maccas not having the golden arches. But, yeah, roll on E3. Should be a good 'un.

#### Cuttings

▶ Pan handled

LEGO Lord of the Rings with my brother. Beating up Frodo as Sam with a frying pan is hard

Daniel Hanson. via Facebook

Ah, domestic violence, the wicked witch of comedy.

▶ Get your thumb ready

Cannot believe you guys didn't mention Steve Irwin animal "lover"

Anders Haywood, via Facebook

There were a few we wanted to get in, including the roqueish Buck from Far Crv 3.

Out of the ordinary PS Vita needs a God Of War game. Alex Ioannou.

Too right it does. Frankly, it's just a matter of time.

▶ Lost in development #1 Has Furious 4 completely dropped Pappington McDeathslash von Bloodkill,

We've heard nowt.

via Facebook

Lost in Development #2 Where is FFX for PS Vita? Stuart Sneddon, via Facebook

Square promised answers soon.

### Official PlayStation Magazine - Australia on facebook.

#### ▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Daniel Rogerson **Need For Speed Most Wanted** "The game doesn't disappoint!"



Steven Charleson Syndicate "I bought Syndicate because \*shhhh\*"



Adam Luttrell Limbo

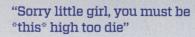
for going the wrong way."



Christian Boiko "I like it more than the

original series."

"Got it for the trophy you get



David Dyer goes to a dark place and,



Caption This

You put the words to the screen. Simple.

# 

#### This Month

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An unforgettable amnesiac experience

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE RELEASE: TBA MAY DISTRIBUTOR: AIE DEVELOPER: DONTNOD ENTERTAINMENT PLAYERS: 1

Don't you forget about me

hen you're making a game that's heavy on the fisticuffs it can only be a good thing to have Streeties producer Yoshinori Ono stop by to offer advice. That's like if you're building a a mammogram simulator and having Dead or Alive creator Tomonobu Itagaki rock up and offer his hands on experience.

Though it's only recently entered the Capcom fold and made the acquaintance of Ono-san, French developer Dontnod Entertainment has already seen fit to reward the Street Fighter series with a nod (or 'dontnod' as it were). Its inaugural action-adventure, Remember Me, stars a British bombshell named Nilin who - when she's not on the run from the 'memory agents' (who must surely be affiliated with the Dream Police, who live inside of your head) – engages in the odd, high-stakes street fight.

Recent assets for the game show a manoa-mano, futuristic showdown complete with a virtual billboard showcasing fighter mugshots divided by a more-than-a-little familiar 'VS' font. The contestants in this case: the palindrome

princess, Nilin, and a beefcake new boss character called Kid Xmas. Great stage name, dude. To beat you we're guessing a kick in your proverbial Santa sack is required, at which point we'll be showered with pressens (Remember Me's odd name for 'fighting moves').

estaurant

Apparently the kid has his own hacking channel, Channel Fear, which airs everyday at 9pm in Neo-Paris. For whatever reason he's previously acquainted with Nilin and wants to kick her arse on international television. What follows is some blisteringly fast kick combos from our heroine which have no doubt been previously constructed in Remember Me's rather spiffy looking do-it-yourself combo creator.

Interestingly, and despite the deadly riot squads and bullet spewing VTOLS chasing her, we've still yet to see Nilin pop a cap in somebody, let alone hold a firearm. There's a pacifism to her that makes us recall Faith from Mirror's Edge, though the comparison wavers a little when you realise that Nilin seems quite okay with tampering with people's memories and forcing them to shoot themselves in an act of grief.

"[Nilin's morality] will be shades of grey," says







Creative Director Jean-Maxime Moris. "She won't be just that very nice world-saving person. And she won't be a mass-murderer. The only person she kills in the game is that guy in the demo released a little while ago. There is no killing. We wanted to stay away from the generic violence that is flowing into most of today's video games. We really want to ask moral questions about her, about how she acts."

Dontnod also hopes to raise questions about social networks: how they will evolve in the future and what we do with them today. Moris wants to avoid the old antagonist cliché of "this is the corporation, now go and kick their asses". Rather, Remember Me is going to make you mull upon such questions as 'is technology good for us' and 'should we all blindly just upload ourselves onto the Internet?

In the case of Remember Me's universe, we're guessing the answer to that question is a big fat 'no'. In Dontnod's vision of the future everybody has brain implants which make it possible to delete, trade or exchange one's own memories - and most likely a buttload of cat related material - all whilst being controlled by a corporation called Memoryeyes. The last remnants of privacy have been swept away in what appears to be a logical progression of the explosive growth of social networks at the beginning of the 21st century. The citizens themselves have accepted this surveillance society in exchange for the comfort only smart technology can provide. Also: the rampant sexting must be a pretty big plus, too.

Moris also says that amid the melee, light stealth elements and platforming, there are several of the aforementioned 'memory remix' moments. Apparently they are to be climaxes that appear at the end of certain levels. Remixes are the rough equivalent to boss fights, action cliffhangers that will wrap a chapter just before you head on to your next mark

Frankly, we like the idea of losing ourselves in this near-future, and going on the lam as memory-master Nilin. Firstly, because this cyberpunk neo-Paris looks absolutely resplendent, none of the tiresome, perpetual rain and Blade Runner darkness seems to apply. Secondly, the intrigue of finding out who our protagonist really is by basically raping and remixing the memories of her enemies seems like a fresh new way to shape a story. Thirdly, we like the idea that when Nilin nonlethally snots somebody, they're not dead. According to Moris they'll get up much later on with a few broken bones and "probably missing the memory that they're married". That's quite the super power, and we can't wait to learn how to use it (on ourselves, in the real world) soon. . Clint McCreadie

doesn't just focus on crazy concepts but also on appealing to the wider world."

#### We Say

Finally, somebody said it. Though your game may not be wacky, 10 bucks says you still have some nude boobs in there. No French designer can resist the urge









#### The Pitch

Looting and shooting in a massive open world that's also intertwined with an accompanying TV show.

Info FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: RPG RELEASE: TBA APRIL DISTRIBUTOR: TBA **DEVELOPER: TRION WORLDS** PLAYERS: 1 - TBA

ere's a new concept: a game and TV show based in the same universe as each other – and each having a crucial role in the development of the series. Both are set on a future Earth after decades of turmoil, where due to an act of reluctant aggression an alien collective, the Votans, has terraformed the planet.

The game is a third-person MMO shooter and provides most of the shooty bits, while the TV show lays out the scenario and individual story lines. Both will influence each other; key events from one being referenced in its partner, though the game is set in San Francisco and the TV show in St. Louis. Amazingly, characters from the game - that is, the players - may even make an appearance on the show.

US-based Syfy channel has snared Rockne S. O'Bannon, a TV sci-fi writer probably best-known for SeaQuest DSV and Farscape, amongst others, to pen episodes that will premier in April this year. Meanwhile, Trion Worlds are crafting their own storyline, with bods from Syfy course correcting on the way.

Because of the conflict between Votans and humans, two disparate worlds have been mashed together - the animals and plants that the Votans (themselves seven individual species) brought on their ship when they were looking for refuge and stumbled upon Earth, and the location and iconography of our blue planet. It's a science fiction drama in a new frontier, according to various Trion and Syfy talking heads.

It's an admirable if risky concept, and like the inhabitants of its future Earth it steps into a turbulent world that's finding its feet. Firstly, only a mere fistful of other MMORPGs have gone before it – Final Fantasy XI and DC Universe Online - and their successes haven't been particular stellar. Secondly, how strong is the relationship between the game and show? If one goes toes up, what does that mean for the other if characters and events are intertwined?

In practice, the game aims to be a solid, third-person shooter where you are a bounty hunter, but one filled with thousands of other players all taking part in quests at the same time. You could think of the structure being similar to Borderlands – levelling-up a character as you go on a quest to shoot whateverthe-hell alien it is in the face. Rather than you being labeled as a certain class with a heavily prescribed role you have a particular skill (much like Gearbox's vault hunters), offering variations of ability that riff around subterfuge and







physical movement. You're free to pick up and become proficient with any weapon, and also heal your comrades with the appropriate tool.

Quests are mostly set up to pit groups of players against something in the world, for example a massive boss battle that draws in as many people as possible on the server. Or, smaller teams might be involved in multi-stage events. Getting to each point is as simple as selecting a quad-bike from your inventory and scooting across the terrain.

Where it struggles is carving out a sense of visual identity, and having combat that feels anything but run-of-the-mill. You'll be familiar with what you can do, like taking cover, or getting hold of a mounted gun. What you're tasked to do is great, and having loads of other people to do it with is even better, but we're unsure how successfully *Defiance* could stand on its own merits. Play it solo and you'll feel like a very small and disengaged cog away from the rest of the gang, despite the slow drip of better weapons and attachments waiting to be looted.

Maybe that's to be expected. The clue is in the name of the genre – massively multiplayer – and so-so visuals are hardly a surprise considering the swarm of other players in the wide open world. Still, we're excited to see if this is the MMO that'll be a hit on PS3. **4. Paul Taylor** 

#### They Say

"You come to the town as an ark hunter to establish law in a frontier town of San Francisco, coming up against alien monsters or factions that want their destruction."

#### We Say

As a package Defiance is risky, despite familiar components. Its success hinges partially on that of the TV show, on the reliability and speed of the servers.

#### Verdict









#### The Pitch

Final Fantasy XIII - We Got It Right This Time edition.

#### Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION-RPG
RELEASE: TBA 2013
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO
BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX
PLAYERS: 1

here to now for Final Fantasy? Once considered the apex of Japanese role-playing games, the series has been in decline for some time. Commercially, everything's still hunky-dory, as the sales of both FFXIII and FFXIII-2 demonstrate. The critical picture tells a different story, however.

FFXIII and XIII-2 aren't bad games per se, but they are terribly, terribly mediocre. God, XIII with its "endless corridor" level design and cast of thoroughly unlikeable characters... it makes you wonder: is this the same company that made Final Fantasy VII? Chrono Trigger? Vagrant Story? Because, sometimes, it honestly doesn't seem like it.



Despite its insane production values, XIII felt amateurish. Misguided. XIII-2 was an improvement in certain respects. The world was a lot more open, for example, and the battle system – a slight retooling of XIII's Paradigm/Active Time Battle setup – is pretty elegant, and a pleasure to experiment with. On the downside, the narrative is a convoluted mess, the protagonists are still douchebags, and quest design is still patronising and tedious.

All things considered, it was kind of a mess. Sold a shitload though, so here we are with a new sequel, the "final instalment" of the Lightning saga: Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII. Sounds dramatic, doesn't it? Well, judging by the hilariously self-important trailer, it's going to be very dramatic:

The camera zooms in on Lightning. She takes off her sunglasses (!) and stares directly at the viewer, her voice cool and calm. "These are the final thirteen days." <INSERT WICKED GUITAR SOLO>

The whole "final days" thing is a key plot point. Here's the short version: set several hundred years after the conclusion of XIII, Lightning Returns has the titular heroine racing to save the world from destruction, which has been ordained to happen 13 days after the game begins. Again, that's the

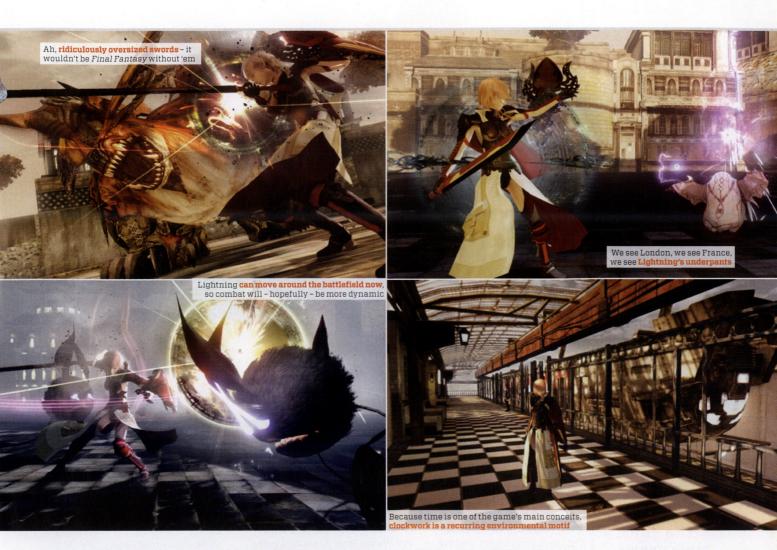
short version. The long version, built on canon established in *FFXIII* and *XIII-2*, is basically nonsense, so we'll skip it for now.

According to game director Motomu Toriyama, *Lightning Returns* has been designed around two core concepts: Lightning Returns and World Driven.

The first is, uh, the title of the game, and is meant to express Lightning's (to quote the official blog) "triumphant new strength" and "ability to overcome great odds". What that means in practice is anyone's guess, but from what we can tell, it seems to boil down to this: Lightning has over 20 costumes, each of which gives her access to new powers and abilities. In other words: dress-ups! Squeeeeeee.

The second core concept – World Driven – is much more interesting. What it means, more or less, is that the world lives and breathes around you, and reacts to your presence in a variety of interesting ways.

Time is one of the game's strongest conceits. As you explore the world and endeavour to uncover its mysteries, the clock is always ticking. Let it run too long and it's game over. Certain actions, such as saving a particular individual, or beating a boss, or failing to complete a quest, can either give you extra time or take it away.



According to the designers, this mechanic lends *Lightning Returns* a large degree of replayability. The constraints of time make it impossible to see everything in a single run, they say. If this is true, then it sounds very interesting indeed. *Chrono Trigger*esque, even.

Another interesting thing: Lightning will be the only playable character in the game. Other familiar (obnoxious) faces like Hope Estheim and Snow Villiers will make an appearance, but will never join you on the battlefield.

Battle mechanics have been tweaked to accommodate this new singular focus, and now feature a greater emphasis on movement and action. Everything's still pseudo-real-time, but because Lightning can now move freely in combat, it seems a lot more kinetic and... dare we say... visceral.

This newfound dynamism is also evident in the new command system. Instead of having to select and queue commands from a menu, abilities are now mapped to the face buttons on the controller, the idea being – we think – to make the process of using them a lot more immediate and gratifying. It's a good idea, and based on the footage we've seen, it works pretty well, and less labourious.

Given its pedigree, and the trailer

discussed above, it seems almost certain that *Lightning Returns* is going to be, at best, excruciatingly average. But then you look at features like the ones we just talked about, and suddenly the evidence doesn't seem so conclusive. Maybe there's a glimmer of hope after all.

The dynamic world, the revamped

battle system, the replayability – it all sounds great in theory. There's promise there. But the thing is: we've been burned too many times by *Final Fantasy* to believe in its promises. What we need is proof, and so far Square Enix has failed to supply any.

# Lightning has always looked like a living doll, and now you can dress her up like one

#### They Say

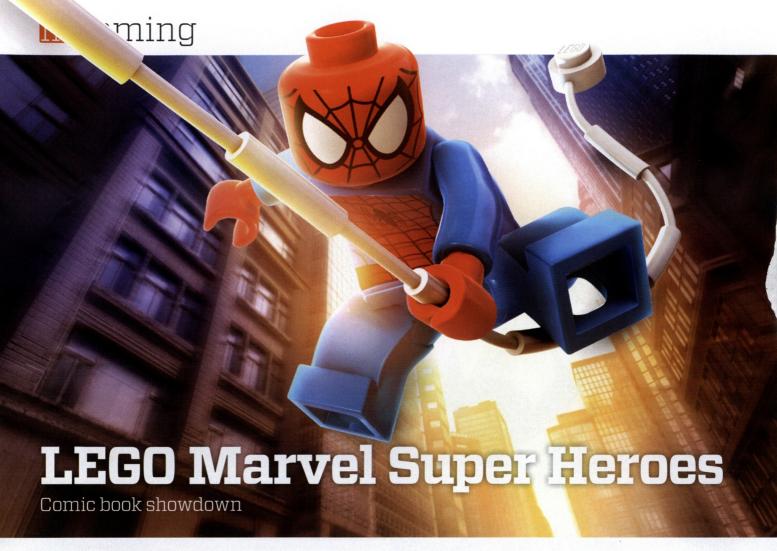
"For newcomers, story primers and helpful information remains through finalfantasyxiii.com on both the original title to Lightning's saga as well as the direct sequel featuring her sister Serah."

#### We Say

In other words: get your readin' glasses on, kids – you've got some lore to cram.

#### Verdict





#### The Pitch

Traveller's Tales turn a new page and stick Marvel's heroes inside a block-builders paradise.

FORMAT: PS3/PS VITA

#### Info

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: TBA 2013
DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER
BROS. INTERACTIVE
ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER:
TRAVELLER'S TALES
PLAYERS: 1 - 4

he LEGO franchise continues to reach new heights, and the first lot of games that made the series look positively antiquated by now. For fans of the LEGO series, Marvel Super Heroes is a 'Holy Grail' title for more reasons than one, and while at first glance you might wonder just what Traveller's Tales can do to prevent the LEGO series from being oversaturated or stale, it looks like it's going to be their best yet.

First up, Traveller's Tales is owned by Warner Bros. who in turn own DC Comics – Marvel's absolute rival. So, it's either extreme good will or, more likely, smart business sense that Warner Bros. is making a game exclusively featuring its competitor's characters. At the heart of the game is The Avengers, the motley crew of Iron Man, Thor, Black Widow, Captain America, The Hulk and more. Considering that the latest Marvel movie is the third-highest grossing movie of all time, awareness and demand is peaking, and a couple of sequels have been given the go ahead. Frankly, on recognition alone Marvel Super Heroes will sell.

Good for them, and also good for us as this looks ace, and TT are

smartly digging deeper than the big names. Super Heroes promises to feature over 100 different characters, all playable within the stages set in New York City and beyond, though we only know about the characters that appeared in the Avengers movie, and other 'must have' characters such as Wolverine, Deadpool and Spider-Man. Everyone's going to have their favourites, and the challenge is making each of them useful and desirable.

All the characters fall into a class of sorts, be it technology, like Black Widow, or flying like Iron Man. Captain America has his shield that can be used as a long-range and melee weapon, while someone like Wolverine has his claws and is near invincible. Each character will be simultaneously empowered and limited by their skills, so while someone like Thor can throw a very heavy hammer and knock chumps out, the Asgard champion is going to be clueless when it comes to opening an electronically locked door.

Then you have someone like Spider-Man, whom TT is giving a lot of freedom. Rather than restricting his web-swinging to specific areas of the city he's going to be able to plant his web anywhere he likes, and launch at will. As you'd expect, he can also wrap the bad guys up in his web, and his iconic 'spider sense' will also feature. Flying characters are also going to be able to zip around, so we're expecting the stages to be pretty big





landscape than usual.

That in itself is a technical challenge, but it's not the only one that TT faces. Traditionally each of the characters conforms to being of a similar height to the next, dubbed 'minifigs' after their real-life LEGO counterpart, albeit with a few limited exceptions (such as the cave troll in LEGO Harry Potter). In Super Heroes, however, at least one of them stands a good head and shoulders above the rest, and makes a regular appearance: The Hulk.

Hulk - a 'bigfig' - takes up more space than his counterparts whilst still retaining his character traits and the typical LEGO aesthetic. His super-strength and physicality define him, and it's this that TT has to build into each level. It goes from the stuff you'd expect him to do, like having areas so for him to smash through a wall, or ripping panels and parts of the stage to pieces, to the more mundane, like making sure that the geometry of the level is wide enough for him to get through.

It's a lot to consider for just one character, so we're expecting a number of the larger guys to further justify these design choices. Concept art hints at one of Spider-Man's foes, the Sandman, poking his way into the world, and it would be a sin if one of Marvel's other super-strong men, The Thing, didn't appear too.

What's even more impressive is that these digital figurines, for all of their stumpy legs and rounded shoulders, move differently to each other. They're more than just re-skinned versions of the same

model. The Hulk has massive shoulders and walks with power in his stride, while you'd swear Iron Man/Tony Stark has an undeniable swagger.

TRUFAX: Wolverines are **gentle**, **friendly animals**. If you see one in the wild, you should totally give it a cuddle

Tying it all together is the story that's being written by Mark Hoffmeier, who has worked on Spider-Man: The Animated Series and Marvel Super Hero Squad. The characters in LEGO Marvel are familiar to him, but the game will have its own identity.

TT's record has proven that you can't take its 'cutesy' style for granted. Their games are made with a lot of love, packed with funny moments and references that hardcore fans will get a kick out of, and the leap from LEGO Batman 2 to Lord of the Rings was big enough to show they've still got loads of ideas left to wow their audience with. This could be the LEGO game you've been waiting for.

No nail is safe from

Paul Taylor

#### They Say

"If you're a fan of Spider-Man, the Avengers, Fantastic Four, X-Men, Guardians of the Galaxy or scores of other Marvel characters, this is the game for you."

#### We Say

This is TT's most ambitious LEGO game vet. With over 100 characters of different shapes and sizes we're anticipating some pretty incredible stages to fly, fire and smash through.







t's a big call from Creative Director, Noah Hughes, but one that might just help in understanding a universally unexpected reveal. You know that highly anticipated Tomb Raider reboot? You know, the game that has been pushing its cinematic, personal experience for over a year? Well it now has multiplayer.

Before you go whipping your bow and green unitard out of the storage cupboard in rage though, hear us out. While Crystal Dynamics has been diligently slogging away at Lara's rebirth, across the seas, a small team at Eidos Montreal has been locked away in a far corner of their office,

"Despite the increased presence of competitive online modes in videogames, nobody asked for it here "

shrouded in secrecy as they developed a whole other portion. No, you're not experiencing another double rainbow; the developer that gave Deus Ex new life only two years ago - a stealth-centric first person shooter - are making a thirdperson multiplayer suite.

It's a rather peculiar move, no doubt, but one that has been set in place in order to keep Tomb Raider's single-player campaign unaffected and focused until its inevitable launch. So sleep easy, your deer hunting shall remain as polished as can be.

With all that in mind, let's break down what we know about it. From what we've seen, matches will consist of four-on-four 'Survivors vs. Scavengers' battle royales amidst various game modes (three that we're aware of), on one of five maps at launch. The first of these will come in the form of your standard Team Deathmatch.

This by-the-numbers mode will see the two groups fight it out in best-ofthree matches that rely heavily on environmental traversal, destructible scenery and the utilisation of traps in order to be victorious. Verticality and platforming are concepts that will run throughout all of the modes, as you clamber up ledges, fly down zip-lines or scale up a plethora of rocky walls to quickly and effectively reach your foe, or evade them.

Both teams will be granted two basic loadouts to choose from: Survivors rocking a shotgun/pistol combo or assault rifle/pistol while Scavengers get a little more Bear Grylls with a bow-and-arrow/ grenade launcher or rifle/pistol.

While most will naturally gravitate to the herculean option, be warned. Sure, sending devastating arrows through your combatants from the safety of a high vantage point can be insanely gratifying, but if your aim is worse than a four-year old aiming for the potty, your position will be compromised and a torrent of gunfire is bound to follow. You still have your grenade launcher conveniently on hand though, so at least there's that, right?

Given the nature of the Tomb Raider's campaign, it's a little perplexing why a greater emphasis wouldn't be placed on the Robin Hood style of combat to help differentiate from the incredible amount of competitors in the ring. Especially considering the game's underlying goal of conveying what it would be like to live within such a ravenous landscape.

Thankfully then, 'Private Rescue' tries to branch out from the norm with an extra





## ding the **invisible Harley** like a (bald) bo With nary a detail to go on, it's

#### FACE, MEET AXE

Don't be fooled: your climbing axe might be perfect for gleefully zooming down ziplines or ascending large environments Drake would be proud of, but it's also a lean. mean, brain-smashing machine. Yes, once you run out of ammo you can go head-tohead with another player as you trade somewhat awkward lunge animations until one of you manages to land the final blow. Or you can casually sneak up behind some sap, hit (a) and perform a brutal stealth kill. Just be prepared to do the dance of death if you fail.

dose of creativity. More grounded in Crystal Dynamics' world, Survivors are forced to scour the map in search of five medical packs and bring them back to a capture point. For the opposition, the task is simple - kill everyone. Each round will end if one of three requirements is met: all five medical packs have been obtained and secured, the Survivors are killed 20 times or once ten gruelling minutes have passed. There's a lot of potential in play here and from what we've seen, matches look to be intense, teamwork-driven battles that anybody can win.

It also presents a greater opportunity to use your traps. A rope trap on the ground, for instance, is the perfect solution to trip up an unsuspecting enemy hot on your tail, allowing you to quickly escape to safety. Alternatively, a sandstorm can be triggered, summoning a level specific event that often impairs the opposing team's vision.

Eidos Montreal claims the third game mode, intriguingly titled 'Cry For Help', will focus on discovery, collection and adventure rather than combat, but have refused to get into specifics just yet. That said, it could very well be the most diverse and interesting mode of the bunch. Or it could be terrible. Who knows! difficult to speculate.

Speaking of which, there are still four maps and another game mode that remain shrouded in secrecy. Irrespective of what they are, the big question remains: did this game ever need multiplayer in the first place? Despite the increased presence of competitive online modes in videogames, nobody (aside from maybe Eidos corporate) asked for it here. We were quite content with an intense, characterdriven title - the reboot for Lara that fans have been begging for. Multiplayer might truly be one of the industry's greatest innovations, but that doesn't mean we're going to stop being cautious on this one.

Allowing Crystal Dynamics to establish Tomb Raider for the future is all well and good, but this might not be the best way to do it. At any rate, time shall tell as to whether it all becomes a welcome romp through the wilderness, or proof that it should have stayed shipwrecked. Adam Guetti

## **SURVIVORS** InJ0Eface O 2402 Lara strikes her "come at me bro" pos

#### They Say

Multiplayer that is "Familiar yet different."

#### We Say

It's certainly not the main reason to buy the game, but it could surprise at launch.





od Mode is at odds with its title.
When we hear the phrase 'God mode' we picture an experience that's ridiculously easy, to the point of being outright cheaty.

Sort of like a digital version of what it must be like to coast through a life as either Hugh Hefner, or one those Kardashian things. Standing in stark contrast to that, this particular *God Mode* is nothing but wall to wall abuse.

ou get kicked in the junk from the get-go. Not only is your character already deader than disco, but they've been thrown into the depths of eternal purgatory (which, incidentally, probably features disco music). Developer Atlus is positioning *God Mode* as an homage to the retro shooters of yesteryear where you and three of your other goddamned friends can link up co-operatively to perforate waves of ancient and mythological enemies.

Call us paranoid, but it's always a

The Pitch

Like a third-person, four-player Serious Sam

There's definitely something odd about the new groundskeeper

worry when the developer has a bullet list that highlighting the phrase 'simple and straightforward gameplay'. To us that sounds like only some basic intelligence will be required to circle-strafe faster than a Ferrari with its club-lock still on, all the while managing health, armour and ammo supplies. Only time will tell if our instincts are wrong.

Four player co-op is very much the crux of this experience (online, local system link, but no shared TV), with teammates encouraged to communicate and customise their "cadaver's" loadouts to complement one another and ensure the survival of the team. The backwatching and the high-fives go right out the window when your group hits PvP zones at the end of a match. This is where your friends will most eagerly put in the boot for your loot and a chunk of your precious XP.

Another potential game-changer are the Test of Faith modifiers. These are 45 random rules that change from wave to wave in an effort to keep combat fresh, the challenge ever-present and your Rage Meter filled (both on and off screen). Each modifier is there to either make your (un)life extra difficult, to give you a rare reprieve, or to "amuse you through pure novelty and absurdity".

We're calling it now, if Atlus' idea of absurd novelty is the immensely annoying narrator of God Modes' latest trailer – who sounds like the Mortal Kombat announcer's camp brother, Clovis (seriously, YouTube it) – then we're predicting the fastest 'start game to rage quit' time ever. Otherwise, this could be worth a look. Clint McCreadie

FORMAT: © PS3
GENRE: ACTION
EXPECTED RELEASE:
MARCH 2013
DISTRIBUTOR: TBA
DEVELOPER: ATLUS
PLAYERS: 1 - 4

#### They Say

"We're introducing an exciting third-person shooter that looks like a retail product, tied together with gameplay features and cooperative play like no other downloadable title has done."

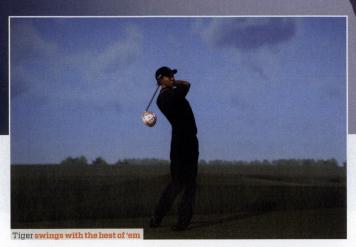
#### We Say

We love us some co-op. Especially if that co-op enables us to shoot our friends. Paradox be damned.



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14

A slice of history



s we continue on into the future, Tiger Woods looks into the past for success in this year's version. That's not a slur on its plan, as some big-name legends are going to take the spotlight. Sports titles and racers have been doing it for a while, featuring personalities and technology from yesteryear so punters can truly find out who's the best of the best from those olden, golden times and the present.

As well as Tiger, you'll see Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, Lee Trevino and more as they appeared in their prime, all in a dedicated mode. Legends of the Majors covers multiple eras of golfing history, dating back to 1873, and aims to authentically recreate the look and feel of equipment over its dozens of challenges - plus fours are a given. Square off and beat these digital representations with

your own custom character and you'll unlock them for good times elsewhere. Since we weren't born at the turn of the century we're interested to see how the old dudes swung it back then.

It's not just the past that's being serviced, as - finally - the LPGA has been incoporated so you can make your own female pro and take part in the Kraft Nabisco Championship, which according to Wikipedia is one of the four major championships in the LPGA. No word on the Wegmans LPGA Championship, U.S. Women's Open or the Ricoh Women's British Open.

The blokes don't have such concerns, as they'll be able to go for the Grand Slam with all four of the majors (the Masters Tournament, the U.S. Open, the Open Championship and the PGA Championship) for the first time ever in a game. That's a lot of golf, and 20 courses will be present on the disc from the get go. We're not privy to the inevitable DLC schedule, but considering that Tiger 13 pretty much doubled its courses through extra content we're sure it'll happen here.

As for other improvements, the online Country Club ups its membership from a piddling 25 to a gargantuan 100, and you can also track up to 24 of your fellow golfers swing trails and ball locations at once as you play.

Swing mechanics have also been refined. As golfers have different styles, you'll have to move the left thumbstick at different angles to compensate for that style. A swing meter, similar to the one that was present in Tiger 09, will be included.

Couple in night golfing and tweakable weather, and Tiger 14 is shaping up to be the update you should splash out for.

#### The Pitch

Golf, now with

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: SPORT RELEASE: MARCH 26 DISTRIBUTOR: EA DEVELOPER: EA TIBURON



#### They Say

Ball is in... parking lot. Would you like to play again?

incoming

"Gives players a chance to travel back through time and relive the rich history of golf by matching up against the sport's greatest legends"

#### We Say

We always max out our player stats as much as we can - we'll put a dollar on our mutant of a golfer against the legends.





#### The Pitch

An engrossing singleplayer campaign that lets players experience the world of *The Walking Dead* through the eyes of fanfavourite, Daryl Dixon.

#### Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
EXPECTED RELEASE:
MARCH 29
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: TERMINAL
REALITY
PLAYERS: 1

y far the greatest feat of AMC's The Walking Dead isn't that it's successfully translated a cult ongoing comic series to TV; it's that, in the process of translation and in defiance of comic-book nerds, it birthed the best character across both mediums: Daryl Dixon.

Ex-Boondock Saint Norman Reedus breathes life into one of the main reasons that people keep tuning in week in, week out to see what will happen next. In many ways, he epitomises the core point of difference that *The Walking Dead* IP as a whole has on offer: how would believable human characters behave during a zombie apocalypse?

One of the many things that the show and comic do to try and push the believability of flesh-eating oncehumans is to never use the 'z-word'. Instead, zombies are called "Walkers", or anything but that word, which tends to be associated with trashy B-grade films. In an effort to take advantage of the popularity of the AMC's gritty post-apocalyptic show and fan-favourite character Daryl Dixon, Activision has commissioned developer Terminal Reality to create The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct.

For those thinking "Call of Duty with zombies", you're way off point; besides, there already is Call of Duty with zombies. Go play a Treyarch

CoD, already. Despite the first-person perspective, Survival Instinct shares few similarities with the mega-popular Call of Duty franchise. In fact, Terminal Reality has gone so far as to describe this game as one that blends first-person action with an emphasis on resource management.

You play as Daryl - voiced by Norman Reedus - in events not long before the start of the show, as he makes his way out of the overrun Georgia countryside towards the assumed safety of Atlanta. By his side is Merle Dixon - voiced by Michael Rooker (who also plays Merle on the show) - Daryl's brother: a troublemaking racist with a penchant for violence. Nice guy he ain't, but a tough, no-nonsense brute of a man who isn't afraid to make difficult decisions is exactly what Doctor Death orders when undead body parts start hitting the fan.

The pitch is that, unlike Left 4 Dead, you'll be scared when you see a group of three Walkers, and have to plan your movements accordingly. There's a strong emphasis on avoidance over engagement, with a preference for upclose melee weapons such as knives, a fire axe and a brutal sledgehammer. To further complicate matters, you're going to have herds of flesh-loving foes between you and all-important survival supplies.

Expect to dedicate quite a bit of time to post-apocalyptic shopping in





#### **Infernal** devices

At the foundation of The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct is Terminal Velocity's own Infernal Engine. This so-called unified system provides all of the necessary beneath-the-hood tech to create a game in a post-apocalyptic world: rendering. physics, sound, AI and even metrics for measuring how players approach the game. The incorporated **VELOCITY Physics** Engine is the prize feature, enabling an advanced collision system, dynamic destruction for world objects, believable driving mechanics and lifelike body movement that obeys the limitations of anatomical joint constraints. Expect an emphasis on realism.

Survival Instinct. To separate itself from the likes of Dead Island, Survival Instinct requires you to weigh up the reward of scoring extra loot at the risk of attracting the attention of Walkers, whose eyes and ears work better than their ability to solve a Rubik's cube. While there is a sprint option to get you away from the ambling cannibals, this comes at the expense of your BO. Yup, Walkers can smell you. Even in this grim apocalyptic future, personal hygiene is a must to avoid being named among the ranks of the undead.

Much like I Am Alive, Survival Instinct encourages you to explore off the beaten track to find items that will increase the likelihood of your survival. Weapons and ammunition are obvious necessities, but you'll also have to hunt down fuel, food, drinks and assorted medical items, essential in your quest towards Atlanta and the end credits. It's just a shame that the visuals shown to date are, unfortunately, closer to PS2 than PS3 in fidelity; but for now we're willing to put that down to the scope of the locations. and hope that there are at least another few coats of paint yet to be applied before release

During the course of the campaign you'll be asked to make irreversible decisions about which missions you take. As you explore the world, you'll also encounter a slew of human characters that you can either slay or recruit. Who you choose to kill, leave or take with you also has a dramatic effect on the way the campaign plays out.

In an interesting Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood-like move, you can send members of your group out to complete crucial supply run missions. Before you send them on their merry way, though, you'll want to kit them out with at least a weapon. The catch is that doing so means digging into your inventory.

This raises an obvious question: do you send them out less armed and hope they survive the dangers ahead, or give away a decent weapon while cognisant of the possibility that they may never return? These are some of the difficult decisions that are at the core of Survival Instinct's gameplay experience, and which mirror Telltale's exemplary Walking Dead game in a very good way.

Then there's the open road to take into account. When travelling between locations, you'll encounter abandoned cars blocking the way. You can risk jumping out and moving them, at the potential cost of a Walker ambush, or you can hope your fuel survives long enough to take the long way around. Hitchhikers will also want to come along for the ride, but you can't take everyone, or trust everyone for that matter, and on top of that Walkers are everywhere.

It's the emphasis on scavenging and moral dilemmas that has us most interested in the potential of The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct. Couple this with two hillbilly brothers that are poised for the kind of redneck rampage that the Walkers won't see coming, and this game is set to please fans and hopefully shambling everyday gamers, too. A Nathan Lawrence

#### They Say

"[A] do-whatever-youneed-to-survive game based on AMC's Emmy award-winning series.

#### We Say

Ugly visuals tarnish a post-apocalyptic package that's brimming with potential.





## **Disney Infinity**

#### No capes

If The Simpsons has taught us nothing else, it's that only one in two million people has what we call the "evil gene". Hitler had it, Walt Disney had it, and whoever thought up that addictive, bane-of-parents-everywhere empire of Skylanders had it in spades.

Interestingly, two of those things are merging together to form an even bigger blob of hour-enslaving, collectaholic-creating madness. Ladies and manchildren, say hello to *Disney Infinity*. Bid goodbye to your wallets.

ome savvy genius over at Disney has decided to 'heavily borrow' the *Skylanders* concept of 'figurines that manifest in a game once placed on a portal'... thing. Litigiously speaking their timing for that announcement was perfect. A \$48 million, utterly unlicensed *World of WarCraft* theme park was revealed on the very same day, thus the Eye of Sauron gaze of Activision-Blizzard's lawyers was drawn

lawyers was drawn to China quicker than a teenager's eye to cleavage.

Be that as it may, you've got to appreciate the balls on Disney. Take for example an excerpt from its official fact sheet: "for the first time, players will place real-world interactive figures – characters, power discs and Play Set pieces – on a device called the "Disney Infinity Base" to activate original, story-driven adventures in the game worlds." First time indeed..

We're having a lend of you, Disney, of course. Despite the obviously similarities between Skylanders Giants and Disney Infinity, this new series does seem to be evolving the 'portal of power' concept quite a bit further. Talented developer Avalanche Software is handling the 'game' part of this product and their successes with Toy Story 3: The Videogame, in particular the kick-arse virtual toybox mode, is not to be underestimated. Infinity improves upon that toy box and you can expect to go bombing around a vast open world environment, creating your own stories and customising your adventures by merging characters, environments, gadgets and vehicles.

Better yet, there are no enforced borders stopping characters from different franchises. In your world you can have an eclectic mix of Sulley from Monsters Inc. chilling with Mr. Incredible and Jack Sparrow. The initial line-up of figurines will include a whopping 40 characters on day one, and you can bet your soon-to-be-non-existent money a lot more are on the way after that. Buy them all and you may also consider selling your kidneys, or turning to a life of crime, to fund the additional purchases of collectible Play Set pieces and 20 power discs. The latter will enhance your toy box environments, add gadgets to your characters, and prompt loved ones to





stage an intervention for you.

All the pieces are in place here, so to speak. But the obvious grey area is the sort of gameplay we can expect. The toy box mode is reportedly a four-player affair, but what form will the two-player 'structured' co-op adventures take? Will they be flimsy pushovers designed to make the kids chortle for a few hours, or will they take the Traveller's Tales route of offering the older gamer enough stimulation to keep coming back for more?

Another mystery is whether or not the various Disney figurines will be categorised into elements, or some other set of powers. The characters in Skylanders Giants are divided into eight specific elements (Magic, Earth, Water, Fire, Tech, Undead, Life and Air). Which element you're associated with often determines what you can do in the game, and it also serves to cock-block you from certain areas. The insidious idea being, yes, you can finish the game with one Skylander, but you must buy at least seven different figurines to see 100 per cent of the game

Also, while we're pooh-poohing things, all promotional material up until this point has had a distinct lack of voice-acting. Don't get us wrong, it was exciting to see personalities from The Incredibles, Pirates of the Caribbean, Monsters University, Cars, Toy Story, Wreck-It Ralph, The Nightmare Before Christmas, Aladdin, Frankenweenie and The Muppets mixing it up together. However, an iconic character without their original voice actor is, well, soulless. Don't believe that theory? Try watching one of those Disney Saturday morning spin-offs where Timon and Pumbaa are voiced by some nobodies. It's like having somebody reach inside you, pull out your childhood and repeatedly punch it in the face.

But we digress. Disney Infinity still has the raw potential to be what the Epic Mickey series should have been: a massive, PG rated, inter-IP orgy of the 'best' Disney characters; not just the shitty, depression era ones that nobody but Warren Spector remembers.

Also, if the rumours are to be believed, Disney's recent acquisition of the Star Wars IP could easily come into play here. But, once again, we're basing those hopes on another big 'if': will the new Star Wars films be worth caring about? Fact is, only time will tell if the Mickey's being taken out of us, folks. Adam Mathew

# "Th. when I said we should hit the road. I didn't mean it literally."

#### They Say

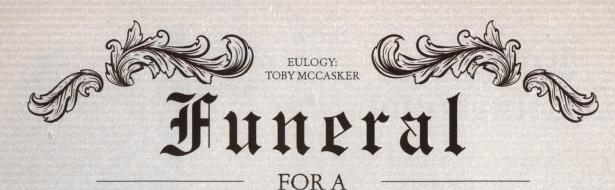
"Disney Infinity combines prominent Disney and Pixar characters and scenarios in a way that mimics how kids play in real life."

#### We Say

It's hard getting the kids to play outdoors nowadays. The day we read about this we bought stocks in Vitamin D supplements.









In early January of 2013, my friend PS2 passed away shortly before his thirteenth birthday. Today we remember him not as he died (in terrible neglect and relative obscurity), but for how he lived: Hard, fast; a jagged line of all-hours frolic that turned my sleeping patterns inside out forever.

first met... excuse me. I first met... oh man, sorry. Hrmmmmm. This is a difficult time for me. A difficult time for everyone, I'm sure, although I can't speak for you, Microsoft. Yeah I see you. I'm not even sure why I'm up here. Some might say I was paid freelance rates to do it, and yes, I will share my mie goreng with you at the wake. A greater truth is that I first met PS2 in a pawn store. He'd managed to lock himself inside a glass cabinet. I'd been in his position, and we became fast friends. I jimmied the lock with a fat wad of cash and said he could crash in my lounge room for the rest of his life. He was a patient guy. He'd sit for days on end whispering quietly to himself, waiting for me. Some might say PS2 was the perfect bro even though he aged more rapidly than my other friends; as intermittent

as his light had become and as loudly as he snored those rare nights we weren't hanging out. He was always there for me. At 4am I would high-five his sharp edges in the dark. He'd whir and beep and we'd buy the ticket and take the ride; have an experience. But it wasn't just one experience. It was many, and they were varied. He was adventurous, and generous with that adventurous spirit. Everyone wanted to hang with PS2. My friends. The Korean guy who lived with us who was really good at Tekken 4. His friends. My ten-year old nephew. My golden retriever, forever clumsy and nosing PS2 into a sudden coma. PS2, bless him, had a bigger than average heart. He was loyal to an easily fixed fault, you know, he never did tell anyone we never got past that last mission in San Andreas. This second drink's for you, friend. Amen.

NOW LET US VIEW A SUCCESSION OF SLIDES DEPICTING HIS LIFE AND TIMES."

HIS FAVOURITE

#### **Holiday** Destinations

PS2 loved to party, and was always showing heaps of different people a good time.



#### 1. Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas

17.33 million times visited "He had a great time out here, getting fat and vomiting and killing the underclass."

#### 2. Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec

14.89 million times visited "PS2 did like to ride. It was just about his favourite thing."

#### 3. Gran Turismo 4

10.76 million times visited "Like, really his favourite thing."

#### 4. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

9.61 million times visited
"Sometimes he got a bit carried away and
accelerated hard, wearing neon."

#### 5. Grand Theft Auto III

7.9 million times visited
"Even the measured calm of never talking didn't help. It might've made it worse."

#### 6. Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty

7 million times visited

"Eventually he went through a bit of a dark period and infiltrated a terrorist stronghold."

#### 7. Final Fantasy X

6.6 million times visited "But he learned to laugh."

#### 8. Final Fantasy XII

5.2 million times visited

"And ride a giant yellow chicken-thing.
Riding never left his blood."

#### 9. Kingdom Hearts

4.78 million times visited
"Except that one time he needed a full-blood transfusion. Where he went then, nobody knows."

#### 10. God of War

4.61 million times visited
"Only that when he awoke with different blood
than before, he forever craved more."



HE WAS NOT WITHOUT HIS



PS2 was always up into the early AMs buying weird stuff off of the TV.

#### RESIDENT EVIL 4 CHAINSAW CONTROLLER

"Life is hard and people react in strange ways. This is an immutable fact of life itself, and so I forgave PS2 almost instantly when he took me to a non-specific backwater European burg with the intense purpose of teaching me how to use what could only have been a chainsaw that had recently killed a man. I was uneasy the whole time. The things we did there, I won't recount here. I can't. I have buried them in much the same way as I buried that entire famil- I do remember my hands were not chainsaw-shaped enough to work the chainsaw properly, though."

#### PS2: A LIFE

He outlived his enemies and went through a memorably rebellious phase wherein he dyed his entire body pink. What a guy.



"Born March whenever-th, Japan. He would travel all over the world by November."

"He needed help adapting, and so he MacGyver'd himself a strange contraption he never used. [note: PS2 Network Adapter] GameCube and Xbox were both born this year, in September and November respectively. PS2 didn't think they dressed well."

"In July of this year his congenital blindness was finally solved." [note: EyeToy]

200

2006

"He lost a lot of puppy fat this year. He could be quite body-conscious." [note: PS2 Slim released]

"In November, 100 million people had hung out with PS2. Never too cool to play with you, though."

"He became a vegan, started listening to Social Distortion, and floriated himself. It was a questionable time." [note: Pink PS2 released]

#### GAMEBIKE

"Because he liked to ride so much, it would be rude but not inaccurate to say that PS2 started to develop a bit of a gut. One day he just couldn't squeeze into his favourite corner of the lounge room and so I got him a GameBike. Now he could ride wherever he wanted in his *Gran Turismo* mobile while peddling frantically, and it was such a sight to behold. However, I often ended up doing it for him. My quads had never been sorer, but the look on his face? Still boxy and dark. But I knew how much he enjoyed it."

#### THE LINUX KIT

"At some point he'd developed a ribald fascination with the works of William Gibson. He must've read Neuromancer five times. In one day. Subsequently I came home after work to find he'd turned himself into some kind of rogue AI. Wires were everywhere, and he demanded that I refer to him only as 'Wintermute.' He'd erased all memory of our good times together. I was really bummed. We got into a one-sided argument. He blinked his red light at me several times, I think. He came to his senses, fittingly, in the winter of 2009."

#### TRANCE VIBRATOR

"We'd been to Japan together on a boys' weekend Rez holiday. Not our usual, but his adventurous spirit was starting to rub off on me. He came to me one day with this. I appeared worried and he'd told me "Stop freaking out, man" and went off waving it around. It started shaking quite violently and seemed to have no other purpose other than to inspire curious and disapproving looks from passerbys. Its creator, Tetsuya Mizuguchi, claimed it was simply an innocuous holiday additive. He is not a man to be trusted, it seems."

2006

"His much hipper, younger brother was born in November. Initially, they were quite compatible and got along famously. [note: PS3 came out] Some dude called Wii was born in September. PS2 laughed heartily, and never stopped."

2007

"Xbox and GameCube both die quietly in the night. PS2 and I have a party with three other friends."

2009

"Overly conscious of his advancing age, he lowered the price of his company to a mere \$99. In September, his hip young brother PS3 trimmed down and got ripped. They never spoke again." [note: PS3 slim came out, not backwards compatible]

2011

"At the end of March, 153 million people had gone on adventures with PS2. Popular guy. He didn't work a room – he owned it."

2012

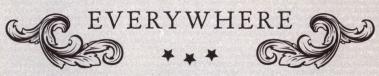
"PS2 had fallen gravely ill by this stage, and in September, PS3 became even more trim and jacked. PS2 refused to see him at the door to his deathbed." [note: PS3 even-slimmer released].

2013

"RIP, GOOD BUDDY. SEMPER FI."



FOLLOWED HIM ····



PS2 was a sprightly fellow and could stand on his head. Naturally, outrageous gossip followed him everywhere.



#### SADDAM HUSSEIN KIDNAPPED PS2'S FAMILY TO CONTROL GUIDED MISSILES

"It was around the autumn of 2000 when it was suggested, somewhat spuriously, that then-Iraqi dictator extraordinaire Saddam Hussein had begun stockpiling many of PS2's relatives in a bid to circumnavigate his country's UN-sanctioned arms embargo and create a supercomputer that could guide missile systems. Pure fallacy, it eventuated, though Japan's Ministry Of Trade had limited the PS2 family's comings and goings because of this exact paranoia. One thirdworld country composed entirely of dust and old hats does not simply jury-rig twenty 128-bit processors with unique software one does not have."

#### PS2 WAS ACTUALLY THE MATRIX

"You can communicate to a new cyber city. Did you see the movie The Matrix? Same interface. Same concept. Starting next year, you can jack into the Matrix!" claimed PS2's father, an older Japanese man by the name of Ken Kutaragi, one boisterous evening at dinner. Ken made me nervous. He thought I was a bad influence on PS2, always forcing him to eat polycarbonate plastic. I did try to indulge his wild claims at karaoke some nights. I felt him a man of considerable dualism, for while he eyed me disapprovingly here he was recommending with real emphasis that I enter his son's mind and go shopping."

#### HE WAS GOING TO CHANGE THE WORLD

"We met a startling figure out one night, and he was wild-eyed and had even wilder ideas. Trip, he said his name was, Trip Hawkins. He'd co-founded a company and reared a daughter, name of 3DO. Funny thing she was. You'd never even know she was there sometimes. Trip told PS2, 'You're a mass-market appliance that fundamentally changes society in the same way the printing press did." Despite Trip's incredible teeth neither of us believed him but nodded in fear, and we

# Rectill #5. Catecrash

**WORDS: ADAM MATHEW** 

After a whopping five hour, unrestricted hands-on with BioShock Infinite we'd liken the game to its young deuteragonist: mesmerisingly gargeous and worthy of the deepest affection. Come meet the sequel that holds all the potential of the 'infinite' part of its moniker, an experience that's just as magnetic as its skyhooks...







Standing in stark contrast to Rapture's dank, broken tunnels, this place is wall to wall eye candy. Vivid colours and bloom lighting bathes the streets and it's also the most 'alive' environment we've everseen. Leaves play on the wind, the odd hummingbird flits past, and there's the near-constant bobbing and spontaneous reconfiguring of some truly massive buildings buoyed at every range between you and the horizon. Stop-and-smell-theroses gamers will be on Cloud Nine here as it's almost intimidating how packed full of detail this place is. Shopping districts are overflowing with products, propaganda, advertising and provision barrels to indulge all your thievin' desires (watch-your fingers in some places, however). There's also a plethora of people to eavesdrop on, and a wealth of incidental, scripted storytelling moments to entertain and educate the more curious among you.

You'll hunger to be educated, too.

There are so many unanswered questions about how this city could even exist, given the primitive technology of 1912. Who really controls this impossible place and to what end? Why is the trapped Elizabeth known as the lamb? Who is aiding Booker with hand-delivered telegrams that effectively predict his future? How does Comstock know that Booker is coming to save Elizabeth and how does he know to put up warning signs for the citizenry to be on the lookout for a 'false prophet' bearing an 'AD' scar on his hand? Why the hell does Booker have those letters cut into his manpaw anyway?

So many, many questions.

Relax, spoilerphobes. No answers are unravelled for us in our playthrough, but we can immediately tell that this is a game we'll want to immediately replay for a great many reasons. First of all, it'll be nice to go through the game and hear all those funny conversations armed with



Our Prophet

#### POSTCAL

#### \* COMSTOCK \*

Zachary Hale Comstock is
the leader of The Founders,
the ultra-nationalist party
that built the owoating city of
Columbia. Within Columbia.
Comstock is known as a
prophet, earning the nickname
'Father Comstock' because he
not only has the advantage
to predict the future for
Columbia, but also predict

any attacks from his enemies. including the actions of Booker DeWitt. Comstock was once married, until sometime before Friday, February 13, 1903. His wife, the enigmatic 'Lady Comstock' birthed his child after a curiously short one week gestation period and was killed by one Daisy Fitzroy.

THIS SPACE FOR ADDRESS ONLY

some context. Secondly, we'll want to see how this story branches based upon its obviously signposted decision points. We were subjected to a few, most of them offered by a creepy man and woman duo who appear in the randomest of places. They seem to be one step ahead of Booker and following his progress like two competing punters tracking a bet. We couldn't swear on it, but we think they're the twosome from the boat.

Speaking of doing things over, there were times when we were forced to do just that on the battlefield (read: rookie deaths in a fire fight). Get capped and you'll not just hop out of a Rapture-esque vita chamber – you'll re-enter the world from a strange, black and white, purgatory





#### \* DAISY FITZROY \*

Comstock's nemesis and leader of the anarchist group the Vox Populi, Daisy wants to destroy The Founders and their sympathisers. She is very much aware of Elizabeth and her powers, and wishes to harness them for the betterment of her agenda. She appears on propaganda posters throughout the city, and recordings of her messages are frequently projected onto large crimson sheets with speakers booming her voice across the surrounding area, in an attempt to vandalise the Founders' displays and property as well as rally support.

THIS SPACE MAY BE USED FOR MESSAGE

version of what appears to be Booker DeWitt's Private Investigator office. It's an odd, as yet unexplained phenomenon that robs you of cash and replenishes the health of any enemy still standing. Expect to do a lot of it, even on Medium a fight in BioShock Infinite is fast and fierce.

All of your vigors (read: plasmids) can be switched through via a tap of and can be either a quick shot with an tap, or a holding of the same button will create a proximity trap version of that power. The other half of your dual-wield is an array of the usual suspect guns: pistols, repeating machine guns, shotguns and a sniper rifle. Enemies seemed quite vocal and were intelligent

flankers, plus there are pesky teleporter types and suicide bombers that'll keep you on your toes.

Interesting switch-ups to the usual formula include a sprint function on L3, a somewhat awkward iron-sight function on R3, and a melee function on (a) (tap to whack, hold to execute). The latter is surprisingly brutal as the skyhook can be sunk into foreheads, it also slices open throats and decapitates in a jiffy, too. Speaking of confronting scenes when Booker acquires his vigors (e.g. the fire ability burns his flesh right down to the bones) and when you immolate or peckstorm somebody with a murder of crows the end results will not please the





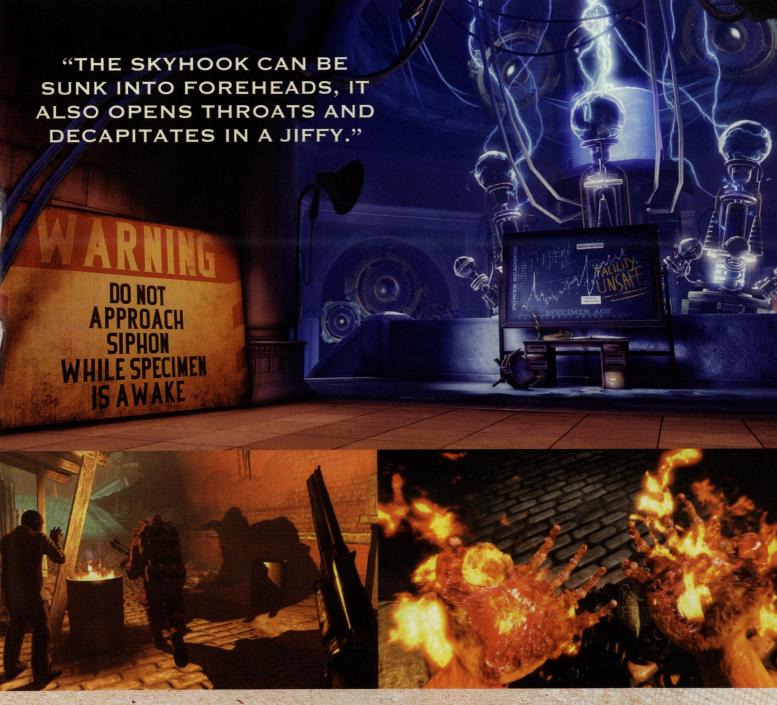
\* GOING OFF, THE PAILS \*

As our demo progresses we gain access to the skyhook, a magnetised doodad that is strapped to Booker's left hand. Initially it can be used to leapfrog between static 'hook points' dotted around the world and highlighted with a helpful green lightbulb. Once attached you're then offened a contextual this is where you'll land if you tap X" indicator. Place that over an enemy and you'll slingshot into them and knock their unfortunate arse for six.

The skyhook gets even cooler when you use it on the rollercoaster style skylines crisscrossing Columbia. To begin with it's a struggle to keep yourself facing the right way, especially if you've panned your head about to take potshots at enemies on the 'ground' (or towards other 'skyhookers' chasing you). Interestingly. it's not as on-rails as you'd imagine. Booker can be made to leap between skyline tracks with X and you can reverse your momentum whenever you wish.

you: going in we weren't enthusiastic about the setting. A 1940s city under the waves built by nothing but "grit, sprit and a whole bunch of superpowered people who discovered a DNA-rewriting sea slug" did require some suspension of disbelief. The idea of an impossibly heavy and much more vast city - complete with robo-horse drawn carts, skyhook transit system, terminator George Washingtons and superpowers gifted by what appears to be old-timey lemonade - running off 1890s technology? Yeah, that's pushing things to laughably impossible. Be that as it may, the absurdity of Columbia lessened for us the more we were allowed to peek into the clues tucked down its streets and boardwalks.

For starters, for every 1912 porno moustache, jaunty cap and



embarrassingly quaint advertisement, you'll catch the influence of some sort of temporal weirdness. Strolling along a man-made beach in the sky, we chuckle at the stupid, stripy full-bodied 'swimming' costumes of the era as an organ grinder pumps out some music. And then we stop in our tracks and really listen to it. The barely recognisable, tempo-shifted tune he's playing: Cyndi Lauper's 1983 hit Girls Just Wanna Have Fun. What the fu-.

Later still, when we first bear witness to Elizabeth creating a phenomenon known as 'tearing', we (think) we can see how Columbia is possible. Upon reaching Elizabeth's epic tower prison in the centre of Comstock's wacky sky-land, we discover that she's not so much a prisoner, but a closely studied specimen. She's completely oblivious to the fact that her stately quarters are a system of one-way mirrors, and her talents and hobbies (such as code breaking and painting) are meticulously documented in small movie theatres dotted about the facility. This eerily deserted place is stuccoed with warnings, and thanks to

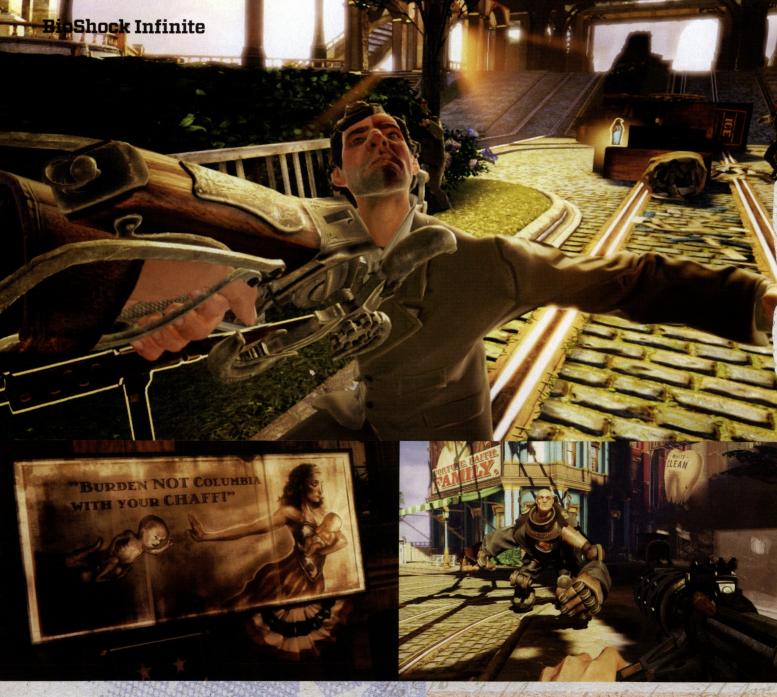
some discarded voxaphone recordings (audiologs), we're told in no uncertain terms that Elizabeth's custodians were utterly shit-scared of her.

Voyeuristically watching Elizabeth go about her day, we see her hug a book about Paris and stare off into the distance wistfully. She then turns to a recently painted picture of the Eiffel tower and casually rends open reality (whether it's time travel, or a bridge to a parallel universe is uncertain) and creates a portal to French-ville.

It's a law-dropping moment. The neon Tit street of 'other-Paris' is in full swing as a local cafe pumps out the 1985 Tears For Fears hit Everybody Wants to Rule The World. Elizabeth's blissful reverie is broken when she's forced to patch the rift to avoid an incoming ambulance. A bit later on, once Booker makes his introductions, Elizabeth explains that these 'tears' cannot be manifested just anywhere, and though what destination she gets can be dangerous and unpredictable, there's definitely an element of 'wish-fulfilment' to it. The

"[LIZ'S] NOT SO MUCH A PRISONER. BUT A CLOSELY STUDIED SPECIMEN."







possibilities of Irrational's universe then open up to us. Elizabeth may well be being used as an acquirer of advanced technology from an unlimited number of alternate universes.

Thankfully her unique ability isn't just tied to scripted moments; we get a brief taste of how her summoning skills can be used to aid Booker when the chips are down, in one firefight she manifests a black and white 'preview projection' of sorts that lets us materialise, on the fly, more cover, elevated skyhook positions, or an automated gun turret.

It also has to be said that while the delicate Elizabeth can't be counted on to shoot enemies in a scrap, she's quite the supportive partner. Amid the catcalls and tactical commands shouted by your enemies, you'll hear Elizabeth yell out her discoveries of ammo, Salt (fuel for your vigors) and even a new weapon or two. It's then only a matter of tapping (a) at the prompt to have her huck it over into your waiting hands.

Outside of combat, Elizabeth, or 'Liz' as she's affectionately called by the folks

at Irrational, is the most fascinating Al construct we've ever shared a space with. Her facial animation and traversal animations are sublimely smooth, to the point where you never see any telltale 'keyframe' hitch when the code tells' her it's time to do something else. It sounds odd on paper, but she's the first Al companion that we didn't want to rush or outright ignore, She keeps pace when you're not interested in tarrying, but if you take the time to stroll you'll be treated to something truly magical as the starryeyed Elizabeth flits excitedly to anything of interest.

Which, at the end of the day, is what excites us most about *BioShock Infinite*. Not only has it retained the "thinkingman's shooter" approach of the original, but thanks to the endearing Elizabeth, Irrational is crafting a shooter with brains plus a heart and soul. And how many games in the genre can attest to that?

BioShock Infinite releases soon, but if we could tear space-time to get our hands on it now-now, we would do so in an instant. Damn your continuum.





the inspiration for their next project, *Ski Crazed* (originally titled *Ski Stud*). It's here that the two hackers recognise their particular strengths: problem solver Gavin is more adept with programming, Rubin has a gift for visuals. *Ski Crazed* is sold for \$250 to a small publisher called Baudeville and sees minor success.

A much needed change to the company name is made in 1987 and Naughty Dog is officially born. This is is also the year that high school graduation separates the two friends; Rubin ships out to college in Michigan and Andy plots a course for Philadelphia. Despite a distance of 1200 kilometres, and no Internet connection, the programmer and the artist continue to make games like 1988's *Dream Zone*, an utterly surreal, graphical text adventure that, today, makes us question what they were smoking in their respective dorms. Its success is modest but it bolsters the Naughty Dog portfolio enough to secure a \$15K, 10%, three game deal with publisher Electronic Arts.

An Amiga RPG entitled *Keef The Thief* is completed for EA in 1989 and two years later is followed by *Rings of Power* for the Mega Drive, another RPG and the first videogame ever to have a secret nude code.

College ends for Gavin and Rubin and the Naughty Dog kennel is boarded up for a time. Gavin heads off to MIT to get a degree in Artificial Intelligence and Computer Science. Rubin moves to California to learn how to surf. Once he achieves this he enters the special effects industry.

A call in 1992 from EA founder Trip Hawkins, mastermind of Panasonic's new 3DO console, serves as the lure to hook Naughty Dog back into the games industry. Way of the Warrior, a digitised 2D fighter that's basically a poor man's Mortal Kombat, is born. Despite having stiff controls, horrendous animation and starring Rubin and a bunch of his mates doing some bad martial arts cosplay (including Andy Gavin's brother, Mitch, who plays the drunken Aussie fighter Shaky Jake), WotW proves to be one of the most popular titles on this ill-fated system.

It's also a good enough title to land Naughty Dog a publishing deal with Universal Interactive Studios. Gavin and Rubin get more funds than ever before and some office space on their studio backlot. Initially the idea of being a part of a huge entertainment machine is exciting, but as time goes on cracks begin to show.

"It was a really funny culture there [at Universal Interactive]," recalls Gavin. "Almost nobody there knew a thing about videogames." Being left to their own devices by a publisher that doesn't understand the medium sets Naughty Dog on a course to crash. Big time...

ason Rubin grows up in Washington DC as a software pirate with a love for games. "I saw my first videogame, *Pong*, when I was about seven years old and it was love at first sight.

"At age 13 I got my first computer and I kinda took to it naturally. I started playing games on it, buying games for it, trading games and, well, slowly hacking other people's games. I was a massive pirate." Slowly but surely, Rubin got better at hacking, moving up from cheekily slapping his name on the front of other people's works to changing the games themselves, and then eventually moving on to write his own primitive stuff.

In 1982 a shared interest develops between Rubin and a partner in crime called Andy Gavin. "Jason and I met at school when we were twelve and we loved talking computers and swapping games," explains Gavin. "We both had Apple IIs, we taught each other C++ and learned together, bit by bit. We did, however, have diametrically opposed personalities. I was much more well behaved".

The pair have little interest in what is being taught at their school and so they divide their class time between stoking over games and, well, being naughty. One legendary story includes Rubin being locked in a school closet for misbehaving. He took the time-out as an opportunity to climb into the ceiling via the air ducts and rejoin the class by falling through the roof (after trying to spit on the teacher). Sounds like a classic vent section to us; clearly this was a future game designer in the making.

In 1985 the 15 year olds Rubin and Gavin form Jam Software (an acronym for Jason and Andy's Magic and something that Rubin today calls "a f--king wretched name"). They create their first fledgling game called *Math Jam*, an educational romp that the two young entrepreneurs unsuccessfully try to sell to their school. A year later one of Rubin's real-life misadventures, which earned him a banning from a local snow field, becomes

#### RINGS OF POWER Boobies easter egg

Holding down-right, Start and A+B+C while switching on the game turns the (shitty) Naughty Dog logo into a topless chick. Tame by today's standards, this blew minds back in the pre-internet porn, 16-bit era.



## CRASH



rash Bandicoot was thought up during an epic cross country road trip. While Gavin and Rubin were relocating from Boston to LA in 1994 their conversation turned, from 'I spy with my little eye' to three things: the lucrative possibilities of making their own character action game, the impending 3D gaming revolution, and, surprisingly, Sonic the Hedgehog's rear.

"What we asked ourselves is 'how do you move a 2D game like *Sonic* into 3D?'" says Rubin. "What we realised was that the simplest conceptual way to do it was to take a side-scrolling 2D world and turn it 90 degrees so that you were no longer going from left to right, rather in and out of the screen. We decided, then and there, that the concept would be called: *The Sonic's Ass game*".

The fledgling Naughty Dog team decide that *Sonic's* Ass will use a classic Warner Bros. cartoon style

morphed into 3D. The team then comes up with the idea of putting the game 'camera' on a dolly, much like Rubin had seen done in special effects movie scenes. In doing so they could provide a decent, constant vantage point of the action. Also, its fixed nature would allow the engine to draw a lot more polygons on screen and create dense jungle environments that could give *Sonic's Ass* a visual edge over the competition.

#### "We decided, then and there, that the concept would be called: *The Sonic's Ass* game"

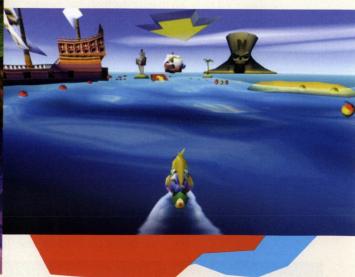
The new head of Universal Interactive and future industry legend, Mark Cerny, loves the idea but, understandably, requests a more marketable, less copyright infringing protagonist. Enter: Universal's suits.

"We knew that we wanted to do an animal character, but the marketing department had some... very... interesting ideas," says Rubin through clenched teeth. "Wuzzles the Wombat was one. That became Willy the Wombat." Thankfully, somebody has a big book of Australian marsupials that provides the answer. Gavin and Rubin flick to 'B' for 'Bandicoot' and both sides of the table love the cuteness-factor, not to mention the name.

Crash Bandicoot is coded into beta form, and in a time when nobody is really attempting a 3D action platformer with a free-roaming camera, it turns a lot of heads. What's more impressive is that the game is made by Gavin, Rubin and five other guys – three of which you can still find at Naughty Dog today. "What our tiny little team attempted back then was technically more complex than what we were doing half a decade later with Jak & Daxter and the benefit of twice as many programmers,"



Crash Bandicoot
is dedicated to the
late Tae Min Kim,
a Naughty Dogger
who starred as
The Dragon in Way
of the Warrior





This is what Sony Japan wanted changed. Crash lost his green eyes (rare in Asian culture) and his psychotic grin.









says Gavin. "We had this extremely complex algorithm to compress the level so that we could run 12 to 15 megabytes of data through the two megabyte PlayStation." After many, many chaotic all-nighters *Crash Bandicoot* achieves final form and it's of a quality to earn Naughty Dog a date with destiny.

At E3 in 1996 *Crash*'s unveiling catches the attention of Sony Computer Entertainment who has just released the PlayStation a year before. "Sony never wanted and never created a mascot for the PlayStation," says Rubin. "But when *Crash* launched it became the defining action game for the console, and that's hard to ignore."

Sony Japan approaches Naughty Dog with a view to publishing *Crash Bandicoot* in the land of the rising sun – providing some changes are made to what they perceive as a character that's been built by westerners

"Some senior execs from Sony Japan wanted to talk about their reservations with [Crash] ... it was a very, very scary meeting."

for westerners. "Some senior execs from Sony Japan wanted to talk about their reservations with [Crash Bandicoot]," recalls Rubin. "It was a very, very scary meeting". After a few odd tweaks to the character [See: Mascot Makeover], Sony agrees to publish *Crash Bandicoot* in Japan and it becomes the first US-made game to break a million units sold.

The rest, as they say, is history. Riding high from the success of this original *Crash* blueprint Naughty Dog continues to expand as a company and releases *Crash 2* 

ANDY GAVIN ON THE STATE OF CRASH and NDI today

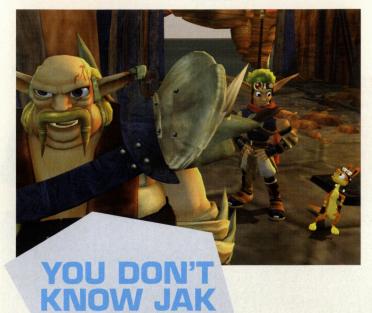
"Crash is a little like the really hot girlfriend that you dumped because of an important-at-the-time argument. Then, years later when you run into her, find she's a hooker with a crack problem'... 'Naughty Dog on the other hand is the kid that grew up, got straight A's at Harvard, then founded an internet company and made a fortune. Plus they still come home for the holidays and send Mom flowers on Valentine's day."

in 1997, Crash 3 Warped in 1998 and in 1999 the greatly enlarged team even tries its hand at a kart racer called Crash Team Racing. Interestingly, these last two Crash games mark the debut of Crystal Dynamics expat Evan Wells, future (and current) co-president of Naughty Dog.

The *Crash* franchise has soon sold over 22 million copies worldwide, is now synonymous with the PlayStation brand, and has earned Naughty Dog a rabid fan base. It's at this point that Gavin and Rubin decide to sever the tie between Naughty Dog and the still relatively clueless Universal. The idea is to pursue a better developer / publisher relationship with Sony, but in order to do it they must give up custodianship of the *Crash Bandicoot* franchise. "I thank my lucky stars to this day that we made the decision, as hard as it was, to walk away," says Rubin in retrospect.

Free to craft their own IP as they see fit, and perfectly positioned to get on the ground floor with the forthcoming PlayStation 2 console, Gavin and Rubin, quite fittingly, base their very next IP on a dynamic duo...





aughty Dog, the chart-topping developer founded by two basement hackers, is bought out for untold millions and becomes a subsidiary of Sony Computer Entertainment. "It just really made sense for us to focus on the development aspect," says Gavin. "[With the Sony deal] we didn't want to worry about picking the best publisher for our next game and trying to haggle out the best deal."

In 2000 Jak & Daxter: The Precursor Legacy is released to an eager public. The humanoid half of this new franchise, Jak, is a strong silent type and proves to be an instant hit with fans who have followed Naughty Dog over from the Crash Bandicoot series. His sidekick, Daxter the ottsel, is less well received thanks to his misfiring comic relief and loud-mouth demeanour.



#### "Daxter the ottsel is less well received thanks to his misfiring comic relief and loud-mouth demeanour"

Fans are undivided about the impressive size and scope of this new world. "What we wanted to create with Jak & Daxter was a game that felt like a single, continuous, giant playground that you could go around and do everything" says Rubin.

The Precursor Legacy quickly becomes the benchmark for which all action platformers are judged, the vanguard of a golden age of collect-a-thons on the PS2. The game shows off technology that nobody at the time can hope to match, and so Naughty Dog decides to license the core graphics sections of said engine to fellow Sony developer Insomniac Games, thereby having a hand in the birth of the Ratchet & Clank series. As the years roll on Insomniac returns the favour by giving technology back and a bond is formed.

"We had [and still have] a close relationship with Insomniac Games" says Gavin. "They were actually right next to us in the lot, back in the Universal days."

Having wowed early PS2 adopters and helped place a sister studio on their own path to glory, Naughty Dog turns its attentions to Jak II, a sequel that is a notable departure from the formula. By 2001 Rockstar Games has released Grand Theft Auto III on the PS2 and the influence it's had on Jak II is obvious. Jak and Daxter's world and inhabitants become noticeably darker, plus there are now beefier guns and (hover)carjacking is rife. Also, Jak is no longer mute, which is perhaps an effort to better differentiate him from GTA III's speechless protagonist, Claude Speed.

With 2003's Jak II comes the Naughty Dog engine



included Faith No More and A Perfect

Circle.

2.0, a revamped beast that enables Naughty Dog's 30 - 40 person team to create richer, more enormous worlds. This is also the game that marks both a momentous arrival and a sad goodbye. *Jak II* is the very first Naughty Dog project of future (and current) copresident Christophe Balestra, but its credits also bear a dedication to Jason Rubin's black labrador, Morgan, the original office naughty dog who inspired the brand name.

The bitter-sweet news keeps on coming. The third Jak releases a year later and becomes another success story that marks the first appearances of Amy Hennig (future Director of the Uncharted series) and Neil Druckmann (future Creative Director of The Last of Us). It's also the last project of co-founders Gavin and Rubin.

"Our contracts were up," explains Gavin. "To stay (on terms we wanted) we would have had to haggle out a new one. Personally, I was burnt-out after over ten years of 90-110 hour working weeks. And more importantly, we'd been training our top two guys to run full game teams. They were ready".

The split from Sony is an amicable one and the torch is passed to Balestra and Wells who hold true to Naughty Dog tradition by wrapping up a trilogy with a racer, 2005's Jak X. All told the Jak & Daxter franchise rakes in 12 million dollars and is an unmitigated success.

#### "Personally, I was burnt-out after over ten years of 90-110 hour working weeks."



#### ICE, ICE BABY

By the time  $Jak\ X$  is on shelves, and the approaching PS3 is looming large on the horizon, Naughty Dog starts its own internal team called ICE Team. In the fullness of time it will become Sony's 'World Wide Studios central technology group'. Its specialised group of code-monkeys focus purely on creating core graphics technologies for Sony's worldwide first-party published titles, including low-level game engine components, graphics processing pipelines, supporting tools, and graphics profiling and debugging tools.

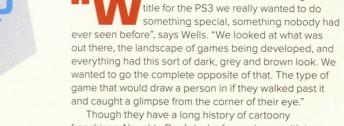
Interestingly, it's not just the first-party Sony devs that get the benefit from ICE's R&D. As new co-president Evan Wells puts it: [Once Naughty Dog] repackages all those routines into the [widely shared] Edge libraries, they then get distributed to third-party [developers]. So pretty much anybody developing on the PlayStation 3 is using code [produced by] a separate development team." In layman's terms: there's a Naughty Dog pawprint in the code of every first-party game.





## **UNCHARTED TERRITORY**

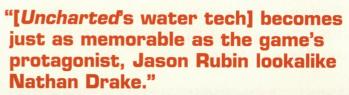




Though they have a long history of cartoony franchises, Naughty Dog's lack of experience with true photo-realism doesn't seem to slow the team down one iota. "We wanted to deliver plants moving, real-time light, water that refracts light correctly and soaks the player," adds Balestra. "All of the details you see in real-life is what we wanted to reproduce in *Uncharted*'s lush organic feel. We wanted to get the player away from constricting corridor shooting and out into this intoxicating tropical jungle where you could just taste the moisture in the air."

hen we set out to make our "next-gen"

Water tech becomes a primary focus for Naughty
Dog in *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune* and the ultra-realistic
results become just as memorable as the game's
protagonist, Jason Rubin lookalike Nathan Drake.
Historical relevance is big on the team's list, which is why
this new hero is given ties (however dubious) to legendary
explorer Sir Francis Drake. Nathan's swashbuckling,
smart-ass swagger resonates with gamers as does the



gameplay built around him: classic Naughty Dog traversal, intense gunplay and some good old fashioned fisticuffs.

"While creating this new franchise we embraced the action-adventure genre in its classic form, but in a contemporary context," explains Creative Director, Amy Hennig. "We looked at what a lot of the old matinee serials of the 1930s delivered – heaps of chases, treasure hunting, unlikely allegiances with a whole crazy cast-load of characters, narrow escapes and risky situations – then we reinvented all that for the 21st century."

2007's Uncharted: Drake's Fortune becomes a stand-

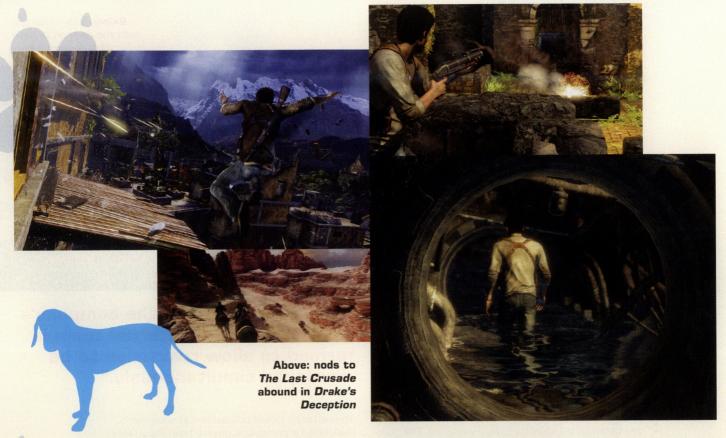


Above: Naughty Dog's ICE Team do really good ice. Makes sense, really.

#### YOU CAN'T FAKE THE DRAKE

Ubiquitous voice actor Nolan North plays Nathan Drake and it eventually becomes his signature role. Interestingly, North was very close to becoming Wayne Allwine's successor as the voice of Mickey Mouse until Disney decided to choose someone with a less hectic schedule.





out hit for the PS3. It's well received by critics, many of whom cite its impressive technical achievements and high production values that are similar to that of a summer blockbuster film. The game goes on to sell more than one million copies in ten weeks, and when *Uncharted 2:* Among Thieves is announced fans are eager to return to Drake's derring-do deeds of action and adventure.

Naughty Dog doesn't disappoint. In the development time after *Drake's Fortune* release, Naughty Dog finds a way to maximise the utilisation of the Cell's SPUs (Synergistic Processing Units). Their estimates for utilisation in *Drake's Fortune* is only around 30% used. *Among Thieves* is made to use upwards of 90% of the Cell processor and eats up all 25GB of a single Blu-ray Disc. True to its name, Naughty Dog's ICE team also turns its considerable talents toward the replication of truly sublime snow effects.

Among Thieves combines its unprecedented visual fidelity with all-new multiplayer options, not to mention one of the most memorable and well-scripted single-player campaigns of all time. Game of the Year awards follow and Metacritic ends up naming it as the most critically acclaimed game of 2009 with an amazing 96/100 average after 105 reviews.

"the original *Uncharted* [uses] only around 30% [of the Cell's SPUs]. *Uncharted 2* is made to use upwards of 90%"

Naughty Dog then starts the unenviable task of trying to beat their best with a third outing that will eventually become 2011's *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*. The team immediately begins to trawl through the stellar reviews of *Among Thieves*, hoping to find negative feedback with which to improve the formula. It's not an easy task, and the weight of public expectation on this sequel is most definitely felt.

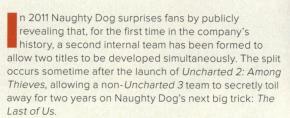
"Making *Uncharted 3* involved a lot of pressure," recalls Hennig, "a crushing amount if we're being honest. Some of it was self imposed and other parts naturally imposed by the circumstances of having a big fan base out there, hungering for any scrap of information. I'll tell you, there's something to be said for being under the radar and being the dark horse."

Drake's Deception enjoys the benefits of Naughty Dog's new and improved motion-capture facility and uses an "evolved" version of the Naughty Dog 2.0 engine. Particularly drool-worthy innovations include sand, fire, smoke, and ocean effects, plus co-president Balestra says the sequel is "running at full [100%] speed on code written specifically for the SPUs". Drake's Deception doesn't manage the same graphical advance seen between the first two games because the PS3 is already close to its outer limits. Uncharted 2 to 3 is still a jump, technically – just a narrower one.

When the game releases it meets expectations but, arguably, doesn't quite best the previous benchmark set by *Among Thieves*. Regardless, this third outing wins several Game of the Year awards and ships a whopping 3.8 million copies worldwide on launch day.

#### THE LAST THING EXPECTED

**Below:** Ellie takes aim with the weapon to have this season: a bow



Co-directed by company veterans Neil Druckmann and Bruce Straley, *The Last of Us* features a tone and setting that's about as far removed from the *Crash* years as you can get. It dumps players in a post-apocalyptic America that's been ravaged for two decades by a lethal cordyceps-type fungal virus. In one of the few remaining, military-controlled quarantine zones players meet Joel, a morally bankrupt black-marketeer who has been shanghaied into smuggling a young girl, Ellie, from the harsh regime. Once free these two characters begin a perilous journey through the USA with major stops in Boston, Massachusetts, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Put in control of Joel, players are tasked with avoiding both the Infected creatures whose sole aim is the spreading of the fungal infection, and human scavengers that survive outside the quarantine zones and prey on wayward travellers. Adding to the twosome's problems are the fact that the military is determined to reacquire them, and the revelation that the pandemic is broader than originally thought. To quote Druckmann: "a great mystery about [*The Last of Us*] that no one knows is: there is actually more than one kind of infection."

In terms of gameplay, Naughty Dog aims to divert from the *Uncharted* formula by being "less linear", though





## "for the first time in the company's history, a second internal team is formed to allow two titles to be developed simultaneously."

The Last of Us cannot be classified as open-world. Exploration in particular is given greater importance and more gameplay weight than Nathan Drake's simple relic collection. Items found by Joel and Ellie can further their survival, help them combat enemies, replenish their health, or increase their ability to store even more things. These items include ammunition, batteries, binding, alcohol, blades, sugar, explosives, and canisters. Along with a simple crafting mechanic, players must compete with enemies who scavenge precious materials in the same environment in real-time.

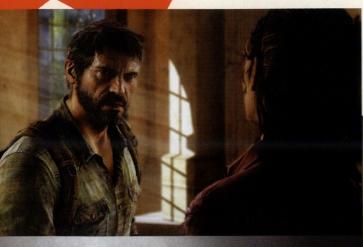
Players unwilling to share, or engage in some stealth, can fall back on *The Last of Us'* very realistic and strategic combat. Unlike the *Uncharted* series, ammunition is painfully scarce, the lethality of weapons is very high, and endlessly regenerating health has been replaced with medkits.

Similarly, *Uncharted*'s M rated, relatively bloodless violence has given way to Naughty Dog's most goriest outing to date. The infected are grotesque horrors that can be shredded to bits by Joel's various traps, but perhaps the most confronting scenes are reserved for the intimate executions the player must make on fellow survivors, some of which beg for their lives.

Naughty Dog stresses a desire for realism and

#### NAUGHTY DOG ON THE LAST OF US MULTIPLAYER

"We don't approach [multiplayer] in any of our games as tacked on," says NDI Community Strategist Arne Meyer. "We have separate teams working on the different components so that we can maintain full focus on making [single-player] and [multiplayer] up to our standards."



#### "A great mystery about [The Last of Us] that no one knows is: there is actually more than one kind of infection"





Andy Gavin, Jason Rubin, Evan Wells



Tess is voiced and played by Annie Wersching. You might recognise Annie's voice from her work on the hit TV series 24 as Agent Renee Walker. She spent 14 years with the St. Louis Celtic stepdancers and spent her youth competing in Irish dance. Sounds like a Riverdance easter egg waiting to happen.

> believability in this new project, investing a great deal of time into the game's Al systems. Unlike the single-minded cannon-fodder in the Uncharted series, the enemies here show emotion and vulnerability by getting angry when friends die, and fearful when they lose the upperhand. This structured Al system is a dynamic, adaptable blueprint also referred to by Druckmann as the "Balance of Power", in which the overall scenario and the advantages that come with it change depending on which opposing group is currently the stronger, better-equipped side.

> Ellie is the player's near-constant companion, but in the countdown to launch day Naughty Dog reveals another pivotal character in Joel's cross-country adventure. Tess is a hardened survivor living in one of the last remaining quarantine zones and has the guts to operate a black market in a city under martial law. As a long-time partner of Joel, the two have become known within the criminal underworld for their ruthlessness. Street smart and confident, Tess is a savvy strategist and

negotiator. Her ability to generate intelligent plans to secure the contraband for their trade is second to none.

Tess and Joel subscribe to the same dog-eat-dog philosophy. They survive by being able do what others can't or won't. Her trust and loyalty in Joel runs deep. However, secretly, she questions whether Joel shares the same emotions that she feels for him.

With the characters and setting teased, the gaming community in 2013 is now salivating for any bit of info. Critics agree that The Last of Us is well placed to deliver the sort of mature, character-driven experience that has become the hallmark of Naughty Dog.

Looking back it's been a long 25 years for Naughty Dog, growing from the largely-forgotten Dream Zone to the potentially genre-defining The Last of Us. Speaking personally, over the years we've felt as though the studio has almost grown up alongside us. It shrugged off the kiddy, cutesy looks of Crash, had its angsty and experimental phase with Jak & Daxter, and finally wound up on the mature route of the Uncharted series, which lead to the world-weary cynicism of The Last of Us.

However, one thing that has remained constant after a quarter of a century: the quality of Naughty Dog's games, and its dedication to pushing the medium forward, has never once dipped below the level of 'exemplary'. Andy Gavin says that the corporate culture and ethos he and Rubin instilled in Naughty Dog was "put the player first" and "provide good value to the player". His definition of value: "wow factor, fun, novelty, and a polished entertainment experience that minimises frustration"

With The Last of Us lurking large just around the corner, those lofty ideals look like they're set to continue Here's to another 25 years of Naughty Dog.

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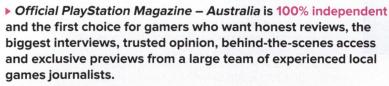
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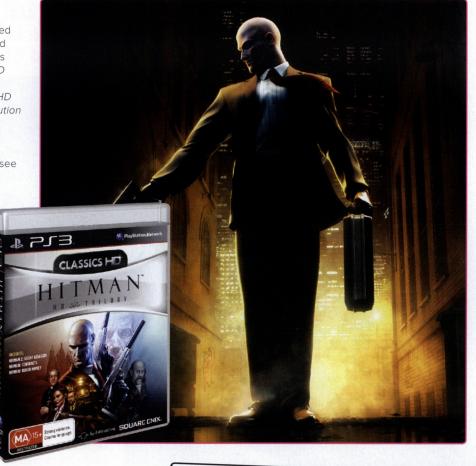


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## mreview



#### **Review ratings**

Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail - but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here - fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available OPS has handed out this score only once.

#### This Month

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▼ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible





Info FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: EA DEVELOPER: VISCERAL GAMES

If you haven't already, apply some zombie-movie logic and stop PLAYERS: 1-2 RRP: \$109.95 hugging it to your bosom. Because the fullness of time has twisted what PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE: you once loved into Dead Space 3,

Space 2.

a necromorph that wears its host's face, but has sprouted more cutting edge extras than

he Dead Space you know

a beautiful, cult-hit corpse that began

to mutate over the course of Dead

is gone. It died. The second

those end credits finished it left

Batman's Swiss Army Knife. DS3 is a different beast, but it'll get under your skin if you give it half a chance.

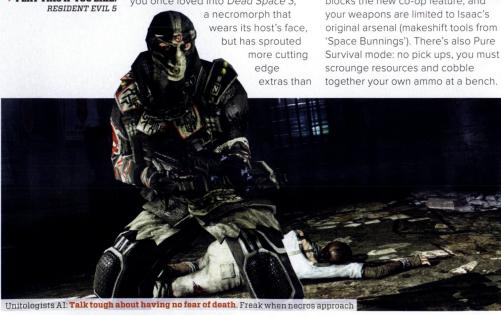
The good news is: this sequel can offer the purist that perfect balance of old versus new, horror versus action but only if they play through once as EA intends. A completed save unlocks Classic mode, which uses the aiming system from Dead Space, blocks the new co-op feature, and your weapons are limited to Isaac's original arsenal (makeshift tools from 'Space Bunnings'). There's also Pure scrounge resources and cobble together your own ammo at a bench.

Still not brutal and old-school enough for you, Manjaw McJoystick? Well how about Hardcore mode: one life, and when it's lost the game resets all your progress to zero, autosaves. and kicks you back to the titlescreen.

Honestly, if you can play any of those bonus modes on Impossible difficulty, in a dark room, with the sound cranked - without your bunghole puckering once - you don't need a different Dead Space sequel. You need a proctoligist. Something is very wrong down there.

All this isn't a roundabouts way of saying that the default DS3 experience is terrible – far from it. We had a blast playing as the longsuffering Isaac Clarke, an engineer who's coerced into thwarting an intergalactic cult of nefarious Scien... er, Unitologists. These nutcases have triggered a necromorph-creating Marker in Isaac's lunar colony home, prompting a trip to the alien homeworld that houses a doomsday master-switch.

Many a neckbeard was torn over Isaac leaving his usual haunts for the ice planet Tau Volantis. Relax about that; a decent chunk of DS3 still has you in the claustrophobic innards of infected colonies, the cold embrace of zero G space, and many derelict





ships pregnant with silence (among other things).

DS3 is also the least linear game in the series. We counted 10 clearly signposted Optional Missions dotted throughout the games 19 chapters. Each of them offers a path of divergence that's packed with much needed collectibles, story beats that flesh out the world and, of course, more nerve-fraying ambushes.

When you do get planet-side it's also refreshing to stretch one's legs and shake off a bit of franchise fatigue. Isaac battles blizzard temperatures like he does his air supply in space, and all that extra room lets you take full advantage of his improved mobility and skill-set. Most notably, double tapping causes a diveroll, and clicking R3 makes you crouch to engage an 'non-stick cover system'. If you're within the general orbit of a low object, Isaac will then auto-duck under incoming fire and can meerkat up to return fire if sheld. Simple, elegant stuff.

This new system simply doesn't factor in with the necromorphs. They appear so quickly in too great a number to give you time to set up a considered defence. It's still very much about back-pedaling, managing distances and trying to keep your cool.

Basically, the gun-toting human enemies are in surprisingly short supply and you'll use cover maybe a handful

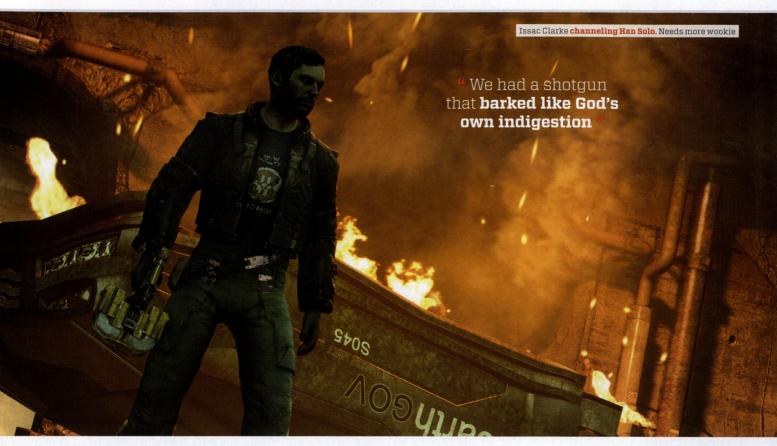
of times. Good thing, too, as while the new firefights are fun, they do feel a little tacked on. The enemy Al won't win any awards, though they'd place highly in a conga line contest, as that's their favourite, ultra-aggressive tactic. Likewise, Visceral has committed a third-person shooter sin by neglecting to include a 'change shoulder' function. Any enemy bullet coming at you from around a lefthand corner always has right of way.

While we're on the topic of lead swapping, *DS3* has stolen our idea for

a chain of family-orientated stores with its Build-Your-Own-Boomstick feature. You start the game with your everfaithful Plasma Cutter and a submachine gun, but during the campaign you can acquire quite a large number blueprints containing plans for pre-configured weapons, all of which have stupid names (like 'HUN1 Badger', 'Intimid8r' or the 'shootbanger'). As per the other games in the series, you can then upgrade those firearms with circuits that improve reload, firerate, damage and ammo capacity.







The more creative psychotics among you can even slap together your own weapon from scratch. You choose a frame, attach two weapon parts, and then add a scope, or a tip that effects what the gun does when you yank the trigger. For example, we had a shotgun that barked like God's own indigestion, and it also put our victim into stasis and electrocuted them. Took, like, 10 seconds to reload, but what are you gonna do?

If you've got the skills you can bypass all this DIY and just plug your way through DS3 on a respectable difficulty with nothing more than a steadily upgraded Plasma Cutter. It's also worth noting that for the first time in the series ammo is universal to all guns. This might turn off those of you who feel that balancing ammo and managing an ever-dwindling supply of resources is a staple of survival horror. The good news is all that frantic stock-taking is still alive and well in DS3, it's just taken a different form.

Isaac is basically the Trash Lady from the movie *The Labyrinth*; he's always keen to seagull up crappy old gels, tungsten, wires, diodes – probably even toilet rolls, macaroni and cellophane – to use in the construction of better equipment and statimproving upgrades of said gear.

To aid in that hobo quest you can opt to switch out your gun for a special Scavenger bot that indicates 'junktastic' spots in the levels. Providing six ice-axe wielding necros don't leapt out of a snowdrift and make your face into a doily, you can plant your Bot at the spot. Over the course of 10 real-time minutes it'll automatically ferry your precious crud to a waiting Bench. It's a pretty cool risk-reward mechanic that you'll come to rely

upon in the harder difficulty levels.

You might also be tempted to place your faith in *DS3*'s new two-player, drop-in/drop-out multiplayer. Isaac is 'joined' by John Carver, an EarthGov soldier who is committed to stopping the Unitologists. And when we say 'joined', we really mean 'you never see him as an Al in the game, but he quite creepily shows up next to you for the odd cutscene'. Dude's a ninja. It's actually pretty disconcerting.

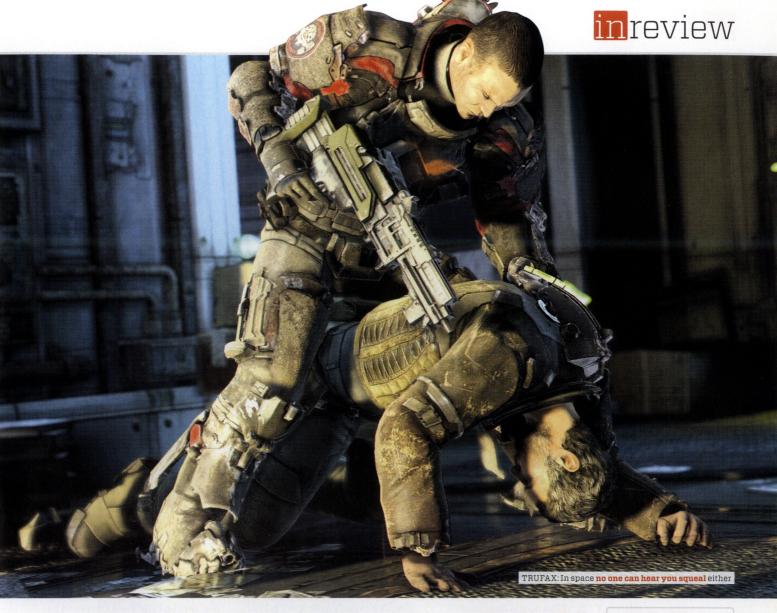
Play solo and you won't really get to know Carver, beyond the fact that

he's an unlikeable dick who'll sacrifice people at the drop of a hat. Hook up in co-op, however, and you'll be privy to a lot of added dialogue between Isaac and Carver, and an additional five hours of Carver-only side missions.

The best part of those is the fact that the Carver player will experience his increasing dementia, Isaac will see practically none of it. There are a number of times when one player will have to protect the other from their own inner demons, typically as a squad of real-life



"The Unitologist plan will unify all flesh into one big space orgy. See you in there." "Retching noises"



#### "Do yourself a favour and play DS3 like a raving masochist, straight off the bat "

ones are advancing, unseen.

Co-op is a decent addition to the formula, that makes a hell of a lot more sense than DS2's ropey adversarial multi. That said, it sucks that the option to just 'play as Carver' by yourself isn't there. Instead you'll need to find a stooge willing to suck it up and be good ol' default Isaac while you're the lucky one who gets to go on a psychedelic mind-trip as Carver. Either way somebody has to be the greedy bastard here, and that's not a good starting point for any co-op adventure.

As you might imagine, the fear-factor drops with a buddy in co-op. DS3 in general isn't insta-heart attack stuff. That's not from a lack of lack of trying on Visceral's part; horrors regularly jack-inthe-box, but more often than not the level designer's liberal placing of items give away the fight-for-your life sections.

We're not sure if we've been around necromorphs for too long, or what, but the best that can be said about DS3 is that it's extremely intense in places. The fact is that after three games Isaac's everincreasing abilities has made us feel much too empowered. Pair your ability to make

and there's not much you can't overcome.

So do yourself a favour and play DS3 like a raving masochist, straight off the bat. It's a slick, AAA sequel that's worthy of its place in the franchise, but only if you take the initiative and crank the difficulty.

We didn't think it possible, but Visceral has engineered a sequel that will appease old fans and entice new ones, too. Kinesis grab a copy, today. 🕹 Adam Mathew

any gun you need with stasis and kinesis,



#### No Save For You

Here's something new. Unlike all the previous Dead Space iterations, Dead Space 3 doesn't feature manual save kiosks. You're at the mercy of the autosave feature, which has the potential to be a pain in the butt in the harder difficulties.

When the autosave does kick in, your character is kept persistent. All of your gear, crafted weapons and trophy progress will stay with you even if you haven't completed the level. This means you can effectively use the chapter select function to repeat a level if you think you've missed something. Or to milk it.

#### **Final Say**

PRESENTATION Visceral is still the master of light and shadow here. Heaps of block buster action scenes. because everything Isaac stands on seems to explode or fall off a cliff

**SOUND** Great voice acting makes the 'bitter love triangle' sub-plot pop. Ambient sounds don't get hetterthanthis

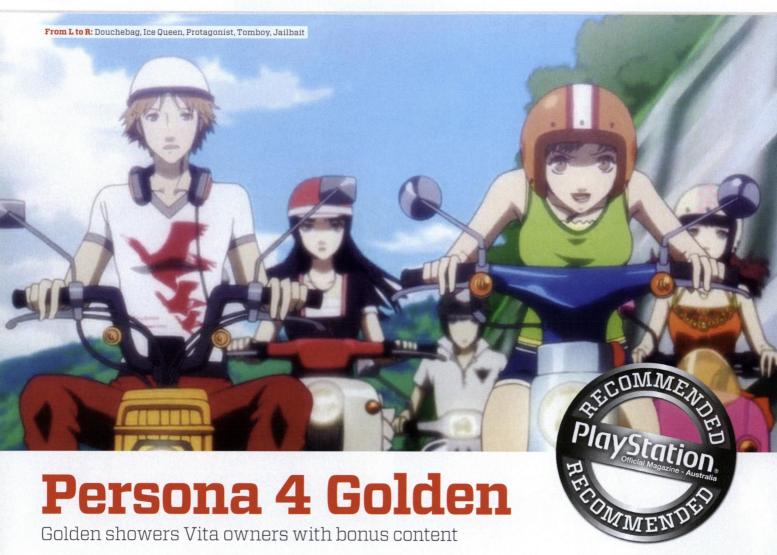
CONTROLS Isaac's sprier than a ballboy now, making for less frustrating boss fights. Cover system works well enough but has a few niggles

REPLAY VALUE Tonnes of guns to create and swap. Plenty of punishing extra modes for trophy-folk. Co-op that's well worth a replay.

#### Verdict

Staves off sequelitis, doesn't alienate fans. Offers sound and visuals slicker than the ice planet it's set on.





Info

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: JRPG RELEASE: FEBRUARY 22 DISTRIBUTOR: ATLUS DEVELOPER: ATLUS PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$49.95

PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
PERSONA 3

hat do you have booked tomorrow afternoon? Who will you spend time with? Don't forget that you need to study. Basketball practice too. Oh, and there's that whole save anyone stuck inside the television before the fog comes and they turn up murdered thing.

Persona 4 Golden is an enhanced version of the PlayStation 2 release, and it truly embraces that description. The PS Vita, with its room to move, has allowed Atlas to go all out on their title, giving it not just a graphical upgrade but including integral new content – so much, in fact, that the entire game is changed from its inclusion. P4G is for newcomers and

"Why?"

"Fit or not, you're family."

"I don't get it."

Dojima

Plus... I'm not fit to be her family...

"So have a shave and brush your hair, you slob."

Persona experts alike. It is a massive and complicated title that requires focused investment to parse.

At heart, it's a story about moving town, making new friends and forming social connections through work, sport, commitment and play. Entering into the TV to battle shadow demons and the evil personas of those trapped inside the shadow world are just part of the game's fabric. Just as the fog in one world leaves and appears in the other after several days of rain, your actions in both universes reinforce and inform what happens on the flip side.

Deciding to eschew your part time job to go to basketball practice builds your relationship with your teammates and may increase your diligence statistic, but it comes at the cost of both money and time lost with your various other friends.

This sounds a bit naff on paper, but it's a brilliantly complex mechanic which ties in with the supernatural beings that you summon in battle, your personas. Gaining personas is achieved via winning them in the card shuffle after battle as well as genetically combining personas in the Velvet Room.

Personas differ in their abilities, both defensive and offensive, and they also belong to different classes. In turn, these align with your various social links, thus boosting specific statistics, experience points and abilities whenever you fight alongside friends of a similar alignment. In this way, spending with Chie becomes more than a potential date; it's an investment in the year to come, boosting your strength for the battles ahead.

Time plays a major role in P4G.
There are not really any levels per se, but rather you are given a full year in which to solve the mystery of the town's murders. At first, that seems overly generous, but it's not long before three, four or more things build up each day, all vying for your precious after school hours. Your responsibilities stretch to breaking point between building up social links, earning money, studying and entering the shadow world to work your way through progressively harder dungeons/towers.

Being a JRPG, combat is necessarily complex yet logical. Any magical attacks are enacted by your equipped persona, which levels up with you. Your own levelling affects the level of persona that you are able to create. Physical attacks are usually the weaker option, but a blacksmith in town will kit you out with a sword and





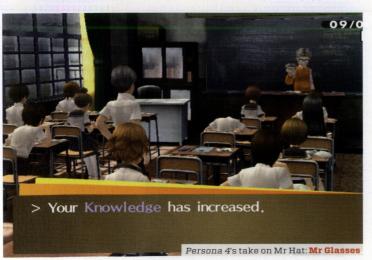
# "A massive and complicated title that requires focused investment to parse"

armour in any case. Find a creature's weak spot – be it electricity, wind, fire or what have you – and knock it down and you'll get "1 more", an extra move to inflict bonus damage.

Finding these weaknesses is important and will build up an encyclopaedia of knowledge for when you analyse a creature to see which tactic will best defeat it. You

can have as much or as little input in the actions of your team via in-game options. If you're happy to have them do their own thing you can leave them be, or give them instructions to conserve SP, act as defensive support or, in dire situations, take over every single move.

Light dialogue and carefree Japanese lifestyles are juggled



with heavy themes of death, affairs, jealousy, resentment and corruption. At times, the story drags and characters irk, stretching out entirely simple and innocuous subjects and themes to the point of breaking. You truly do need to be aware of the massive investment needed to complete the game, with upwards of 70 hours required if you wish to see one of the game's good endings.

More than double that is needed for the true ending, which requires playing through New Game +.
Thankfully, this is made more bearable by the inclusion of a "fast-forward" feature and the fact that PS Vita is perfect for repeat plays, turning long stretches without save points into easily interrupted gaming sessions via its inherent sleep ability.

Persona 4 Golden is a Tardis of a game. Initially, it seems cute and friendly and it hooks you with its murder mystery and time management focus. Once you get inside, it opens up exponentially, awing you with its scope. Quite a bit of this is filler, with an overabundance of inconsequential dialogue. Indeed, you may well never see the end of this one. But that's what the Internet is for, right?

🕹 Dylan Burns

#### **Final Say**

#### PRESENTATION:

Meticulous, colourful and vibrant. A lot of effort has gone into this port and it looks swish on the PS Vita's screen.

**SOUND**: Gorgeous funk/J-pop soundtrack that injects the entire game with life.

CONTROLS: A lot of pressing ⊗to move dialogue along is needed, but otherwise pretty standard JRPG interactions apply.

REPLAY VALUE: With a massive story length and New Game +, you can pretty much play this game forever if you wanted.

#### Verdict

Come for the jazzy tunes and gregarious characters, stay for the social systems and deeper mystery.

# **Knytt Underground**

Everything's (not so) happy



art platformer and part adventure title, Knytt Underground demands find your abilities and discover who your character, Mi, really is. Each screen in this 'Metroidvania' head-scratcher is its own jumps punctuating the traps and puzzles.

through and the world expands upwards and outwards; thankfully a map keeps track of where you've been but only sometimes where you need to go. What you really need to do is push at its boundaries and just go wandering. Very

out fetch quests (once you find them) and sometimes with little indication where the often arbitrary items are.

At times it feels directionless. The story is pretty flimsy and unconvincing, though fourth-wall-breaking nods and references to 'real life' are littered amongst the amateur dialogue. Don't let the scrappy story stop you though, as there's a lot of joy in actually doing what you need to do.

By default your character can climb up walls and perform enormous leaps, and multi-screen drops into water or onto land aren't fatal. Hit the second chapter and you'll also be able to bounce around as a ball - it can be quite gruelling and chaotic, but stick with it and Knytt Underground proves to be very fulfilling.

Paul Taylor

#### **Final Say**

#### PRESENTATION

'Clean' at best, 'rudimentary' at worst

SOUND Beautiful musical interludes that are few and far between

CONTROLS A little fiddly on PS Vita, but old-school platformer fans will lap it up.

REPLAY VALUE You want trophies? Prepare to go searching. everything's well hidde.

#### Verdict

It might look simple but prepare to have your brain tickled and tested.

#### Info

FORMAT: PS3/PS VITA GENRE: ADVENTURE RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: RIPSTONE DEVELOPER: GREENHILL. PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$19.95

> PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE: OUTLAND

you go exploring its caves while you entity, with hidden paths and pixel-perfect There are nearly 2,000 rooms to go

She used steel wool

little is signposted, characters handing

The question you should ask is who lit these torches in a deserted cav

# The Cave

Spe-looky here

#### Info

FORMAT: PS3 GENRE: ADVENTURE RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA DEVELOPER: DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS

PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$TBA

PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE: THE SECRET OF MONKEY

n some ways The Cave is like a supergroup made up of your thirdfavourite bands. You have Ron Gilbert, famed for his work on The Secret of Monkey Island and Double Fine lead by the enigmatic Tim Schafer who also worked on The Secret of Monkey Island and Psychonauts.

They're both thoroughly capable and entertaining but never make a headline act. Together they've crafted something pretty enjoyable and rare - which you'll love if you already like their style.

For the everyman, The Cave is a little plodding. Three out of seven characters can enter the self-narrating cave at any one time, and once they're within its confines new themed rooms open up. depending on who's in your party. If you want to find all of its secrets you'll need to play The Cave multiple times.

These different environments require careful observation to pre-empt the solutions to their puzzles. You don't have an inventory, so you're required to pick up an item and run with it – literally. Grab the wrong one you'll have to backtrack to the right item, and with no fast travel you'll be treading over old ground a lot. Sometimes the glorious-looking backdrops meld into one, so if you haven't been paying attention you'll probably get lost.

That's the main problem with The Cave, but it's saved by three-player co-op. Get a couple of likeminded friends on the same couch and you'll find your old favourites can still rock out. . Clint McCreadie



#### **Final Say**

PRESENTATION Lovely animation and really smart design - mostly.

SOUND Ominous but funny narration backed by a great score.

**CONTROLS** Platform fans will be at home here Could be a bit snappier, though.

REPLAY VALUE Loads to find with some tough puzzles on the way.

#### Verdict

It's a pity the backtracking mars an otherwise clever title.

# **Earth Defense Force 2017 Portable**

Starship bloopers



Info

FORMAT: OF PS VITA GENRE: ACTION RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS DEVELOPER: SANDLOT PLAYERS: 1-4 RRP: \$54 95

PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE: THE ORIGINAL

ld games being made into new games are all the rage, donchaknow, and even though PS Vita could do with more full-blown titles to show off its wonderful tech and potential, a crusty PS2 game that was bogus way back when isn't in vogue at all. And definitely not at that price.

The premise remains the same as the similarly awful PS3 version of Earth Defense Force, Aliens are attacking Earth, spewing huge ant-like creature and B-movie robots all over your city. You go in under the

pretence of having teammates who can shoot but really it's you versus the bugs and a clenched trigger finger. It does get better with mates if you can rope them in.

Everything about EDF 2017 is a slog. Graphically atrocious and sonically awful, low-res buildings comically disappear after being grazed by heavy weaponry. While the bugs and bots twitch and spasm around their own character models, the bipedal robots are the worst offenders here, often getting caught up in their own limbs.

Al teammates only exist to spout the same half-dozen one liners over and over and over until they either cop a face-full of acid/lasers, or perhaps be blissfully euthanized by your own weaponry. Things pick up when you finally unlock the Pale Wing, a flying mech suit, but that's sort of like getting your choc-top after the movie's finished. Paul Taylor



#### **Final Say**

#### PRESENTATION

Laughable. It was basic on PS2 here it's rudimentary.

SOUND AI teammates have the variety and depth of a child's pull-toy. The toys are a little less predictable, however.

CONTROLS Standard third-person affair. You can turn off all the pointless touchscreen camera controls

#### REPLAY VALUE The

flying mech opens up at the end, which is actually cool. Should've been there from the start though.

#### Verdict

A train-wreck of a game half-salvaged by a reasonable multiplayer mode. You can dodge it entirely.

# **Hitman: HD Trilogy**

A target worth taking out

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO **BANDAI PARTNERS** DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$49.95

> PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE: KILLING TIME

hen we heard about Hitman 2: Silent Assassin, Hitman: Contracts and Hitman: Blood Money arriving in a pack, three things happened. Somebody said "talk about a greatest hits collection", sunglasses were put on, and someone else screamed "veaaahh".

Hitman 2 is obviously the roughest of this bunch. While the Al is dopey, the textures aren't well-served by the sharper resolution and the polygon limit makes 47's





Ah, the old hide-the-gun-behind-your-back trick

bald head look like a pineapple, that unique HItman formula is enough to keep you hooked and coming back.

This series is basically a third-person shooter married with a stealth game and a puzzler. Guns abalazing is for rookies. You'll soon crave the satisfaction that comes from rigging events to turn a bloody murder into a bloody hilarious accident.

Contracts refined that formula to some degree, but it's Blood Money that makes this package purchase-worthy. It introduced NPC shields, better combat, climbing, body disposal and oddball improvised weapons and disguises.

Sadly, not a lot of love has gone into cleaning up these remakes. The time capsule is rusty, but there's enough old school challenge and timeless dark humour to justify a buy. L Clint McCreadie

#### **Final Say**

PRESENTATION From oldest game to latest: ugmo, getting acceptable, easy on the eyes.

SOUND Some of the best dynamic, in-mission music ever made.

CONTROLS Changes quite a bit between the games, which is frustrating. They're all servicable once you get

REPLAY VALUE Expect to explore and replay levels a lot (without too much rage). Heaps of Easter Eggs to uncover.

#### Verdict

If you hate trial and error, you'll hate this. But if you want a challenge look no further.

# inreview



# Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath

Furry justice

he slow and steady resurrection of the Oddworld universe continues with this very decent port of the 2005 title that never appeared on PS2. It's been lovingly updated for a widescreen platform, and on PS Vita a few deft touchscreen modifications have been implemented to compensate for two missing shoulder buttons.

You are Stranger, a bounty hunter in a weird wild west who despises guns. Instead, he carries a double-barrelled crossbow that can be loaded with different types of live ammo — quite literally. These caricatures of animals either entice enemies, distract them or incapacitate them outright.

Stranger's Wrath remains unique in that it straddles a third- and first-

person viewpoint; the former for shooting, the latter for exploring and traversing the environment at speed.

More than seven years on and Stranger's Wrath is still fresh. Apart from some annoying pop-up tutorial boxes on PS Vita and some niggling issues when retrieving ammo, it's still unabashedly brilliant. A must buy for sure. Paul Taylor

#### Inf

FORMAT: PS VITA
GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ODDWORLD
INHABITANTS
DEVELOPER: JUST ADD WATER
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$19.95

▶ PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKED: ABE'S ODDYSEE, ANY SHOOTER FROM THE LAST DECADE

#### **Final Say**

#### PRESENTATION

Superbly done, save for tutorial boxes that can get in the way.

**SOUND** Stranger's drawl is a highlight, as it the 'pop' when he captures a bounty.

**CONTROLS** Fiddly when capturing some ammo, otherwise fine and predictable.

#### REPLAY VALUE

A new difficulty setting, and situations can be tackled in different ways.

#### Verdict

It's a bit better on PS3, but this PS Vita version has seen no less love. A brilliant title with

minor problems. Get it!





#### Life of Pixel

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: PLATFORMER
RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: SUPER ICON
DEVELOPER: SUPER ICON PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$3.45

Simultaneously a wistful romp through the evolution of consoles of yesteryear that were probably made before you were born, and the type of punishing platformers that were on those consoles. It's balls-out hard pretty much from the get go, demanding pixel-perfect (snarf) jumps and committing entire levels to memory. There's a point where it goes from being cute to very annoying, though. An update may fix this.

#### Verdict

Clever at first then downright punishing and borderline unfair.



# Score 1771245 EVEL 13 11 TO BEAT: 01 2929697 \* \* 300 NICC! \* \* NICC! \* \* Surge

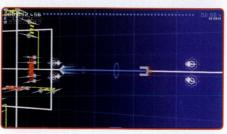
FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: PUZZLE
RELEASE: OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: FUTURLAB
DEVELOPER: FUTURLAB PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$5.45

Futurlab are quickly making a name for themselves as grade-A indie devs, and *Surge* is a highlight in their tidy catalogue. It's a tile matching affair with tonnes of modifiers working for and against you, all in the pursuit of a bigger and more elusive highscore. As pressure builds in each stage, the tiles have to be removed to open up the coloured valves. The most bangin' soundtrack this side of *WipEout* keeps the atmosphere tense.

#### Verdict

A stylish reaction and skills-based puzzler. Perfect for short stints.





#### escapeVektor

FORMAT: PS VITA GENRE: ACTION RELEASE:
OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: NNOOO DEVELOPER: NNOOO
PLAYERS: 1 RRP: \$15.95

Believe it or not, this Australian-made title is more like *Pac-Man* than you'd initially think. The goal is to skirt along every line in each stage's maze as the titular Vektor, covering every line so that the next maze becomes available. Enemies patrol the lines, and you'll have to either dodge them and their various traps or blow them up. There's plenty to do with the levels quickly becoming more and more fiendish. Very smart.

#### Verdict

Whip-quick thrills from a homegrown dev. Check it out.





# Win a *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch* and Studio Ghibli prize pack!

# Includes a copy of the game and two Studio Ghibli movies on Blu-ray!

tudio Ghibli are one of Japan's premier animation studios, and for the first time ever they've teamed up with one of Japan's most prolific development studios, Level-5, to make the completely excellent *Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch.* It's a JRPG that looks like an anime but plays with the depth and grace of a 30-hour-plus adventure.

Thanks to Namco Bandai Partners, you can win a copy of *Ni No Kuni* along with Studio Ghibli's animes, *Howl's Moving Castle* and *Arrietty Special Edition*, both on Blu-ray.

In *Ni No Kuni*, a young boy called Oliver enters the world of Ni No Kuni, a parallel universe in which he hopes to find and rescue his recently deceased mother.
Accompanied by Drippy, a childhood toy brought to life, and carrying a book of magic, Oliver meets versions of people and animals he knows from the 'real' world to help him in his quest.

Studio Ghibli's anime's Howl's Moving Castle and Arrietty are two classics that belong in everyone's Blu-ray collection, and by answering the question below in 25 words or less and following the entry instructions, you can win one of these prize packs!

Question: what childhood toy would you most like to bring to life, and why?

Ni No Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch is available in stores now. For more Studio Ghibli on Blu-Ray, visit madman.com.au/studioghibli



### **How to Enter**

To enter this Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia competition email your entries to ops@citrusmedia.com.au with 'Ni No Kuni comp' in the subject line. Only one email entry is allowed – multiple entries will be deleted. Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to Ni No Kuni comp, Citrus Media, PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW 2002. Please include your name, age, and addresses with your answers (email and postal). For postal entries please write all details on the back of the envelope. Competitions close 26/03/2013. Winners will be notified by mail.

internet News, DLC, REVIEWS

WHAT'S NEW

# PSN

#### DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

ell finally. After months of hemming and hawing about "technical difficulties" Bethesda Softworks has at last confirmed that the entire backlog of add-on content for *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* will be available for purchase from PSN this month.

Unfortunately, an exact release date and pricing details were not available at the time of writing, but what we do know is that each add-on will be sold at 50% discount for the first week it's available. So, assuming it hasn't all been released by the time you read this, you should totally get on that and take advantage of Bethesda's apologetic generosity.

Based solely on the fact that it lets you tame and ride a goddamn dragon, we're pretty confident that *Dragonborn* will be pick of the pack, although we've heard good things about the vampire-themed *Dawnguard* expansion as well. *Hearthfire*, in which you can purchase land, build a house, and raise a family of adopted children, sounds like it could be good fun for a few hours in a *Sims*-y kind of way, but maybe not so much beyond that.

In other, non-Skyrim related news, developer Deep Silver has announced that it is bringing Sacred Citadel to PSN in a few months time. An unusual spinoff of Deep Silver's popular Sacred RPG series, Sacred Citadel will feature



and we're quoting the trailer here – "wild warriors", "b\*tchin battles", "ridonkulous rides", and "crazy co-op". So: a vibrant multiplayer brawler with a cartoony art-style and a self-aware, potentially insufferable sense of humour. Sounds good! Mostly! We'll keep you updated as new details come our way.

Finally, music video service VidZone has been updated with a whole host of neato social features. Among other things, you can now send and receive videos, follow other users and access their playlists, create collaborative playlists, and explore artists in detail with new artist Zone pages. Cool beans.



# VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT



#### PHOENIX - 1901

These three videos follow a couple of thematic threads. First up, this French band set up a light show that amplifies their punchy indie rock.



#### THE DRUMS -LETS GO SURFING

Not a typo. The delicate but fast-paced vocals get a good deal of emphasis when the word 'SURFING' pops up.



#### KANYE WEST -ALL OF THE LIGHTS

And then Mr. West ties the lot together with a hyperactive light show, and hig bold words about LIGHTS LIGHTS! ALL OF THE LIGHTS!

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available free on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 30,000 music videos at the push of a button!



# PlayStation<sub>®</sub>Network

# ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



#### NI NO KUNI

Enjoy the biggest RPG release of the year in this magical journey into a parallel universe. Exquisite visuals, a refreshing combat system and an endearing story. Truly fulfilling.



#### DMC

Dante as you've never seen him before with higher production values, an engrossing story line and kick-ass combat. For all the whiny babies out there, the haircut is not a problem.



#### FAR CRY 3 DELUXE BUNDLE DLC

Six single player missions, four rare animals to hunt, a bow and flare gun for multiplayer and all previously released retail bonuses, for just under \$16



#### AC III: THE BATTLE HARDENED PACK

Three new multiplayer characters, three maps for multiplayer — Charlestown, Fort St-Mathieu and Saint Pierre — for the same price as a large pizza.



#### MOTORSTORM RC COMPLETE EDITION

Buy this on PS3 and get the PS Vita version for free. All the DLC – cars, tracks – for about \$15. It's an unbeatable bargain, and also allows for cross-play.

# WHAT IS PSN?

subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies



Joel W. Meekings



Trophy: Clean Hands An awesome

game, a cracking story and what an ending!



**Andrew Willing** 



Trophy: Magic Mushrooms Made me feel like I was back in my 20s.



David Abbott Game: Batchet & Clank HD Trophy: Bolt Collector



Because patience is a virtue and I wanted that damn

platinum!



GENRE: SHOOTER RELEASE; OUT NOW DISTRIBUTOR: 2K GAMES DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE PLAYERS: 1 - 4 RRP: \$12.95

### DI.C >

# **Borderlands 2 - Sir Hammerlock's Big Game Hunt**

ally bally-ho vault hunters! Welcome to Sir Hammerlock's ever so British, ever so reserved, ever so taxing Big Game Hunt. Now that you've given that dastardly Handsome Jack's backside a caning, searched for pirate booty and shown Mr. Torgue the true meaning of 'carnage' you're suitably warmed up. Pandora is home to many wondrous and dangerous creatures and it's your duty to eviscerate them all, or something along those lines.

Instead of focusing on big game hunting as you may have been led to believe you'll face yet another generic boss with designs on

Pandora. The entirely forgettable Professor Nakayama idolized the formerly breathing tyrant Handsome Jack and is out for revenge... yawn. This third DLC addition may be tough and challenging, but it lacks much of the charm and punch of its predecessors.

Of the new enemy types the human element is the most troublesome, particularly the witch doctor. These right proper bastards can regenerate health, become an invulnerable whirling dervish and even heal and power up their brothers in arms to various levels of badassedness. They are a handful, prickish and you best take them

down hard and fast if you want to survive.

As the title suggests there are you beasties to stuff and mount on the wall of your lodge, but sadly these are raid missions or side quests. The main campaign is the least appealing aspect making this the weakest DLC offering yet. Also, it's been almost five months since launch Gearbox, don't you think it's about time you raised the level cap?

#### Dave Kozicki

#### VERDICT

Plenty of side quests to beat, but a lackluster central story line.



# PlayStation<sub>®</sub>Network

### BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



#### CALL OF DUTY: RI.ACK OPS II

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH / INFINITY WARD PLAYERS: 1 - 16 This year's game is a revolution, ditching old conventions as well to competitive multiplayer. It's never been so good, and Zombies is a fine diversion too



#### DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
PLAYERS: 2 - 8
Excellent. You'll spend most

of your time playing Tag and Trailblazer, and while it sounds



#### **JOURNEY** DEVELOPER: THATGAMECOMPANY PLAYERS: 2

Alright, so it's limited but you've never played a game like this online. You'll be amazed by the level of cooperation you'll share with your fellow travellers, and it'll remind you that benevolence resides in the heart of strangers.



#### FIFA 13 DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS

PLAYERS: 1 - 22 Football Club is just one reason life and your digital career mesh seamlesly into one. As usual, the brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches



#### **BATTLEFIELD 3**

**DEVELOPER:** DICE **PLAYERS:** 1 - 24 You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction of storming in to an enemy base on the back of tactics. Team matches have little friendly or don't play at all



HITMAN: HD TRILOGY

# Uncovering Hitman HD Trilogy's Best Easter Eggs

Digging into IO's re-released stealth classics? You may have missed these hidden secrets the first time through.



# **Hitman Contracts:** *Paranormal Activities*

There are no fewer than six ghosts in *Hitman*: *Contract*'s creepy 'Traditions of the Trade' level, all of which can only be found by lock-picking your way into the closed wing down the hallway to the right on the ground floor. There are five rooms through here, the first of which is coated in blood following a supposed 'nasty accident', and each one contains at least one ghost (108 contains two). So, you know, if you scare easily maybe stay away from this wing (but then *Hitman* perhaps isn't the game for the easily jostled).

#### Hitman Contracts: Mr 47, What Does DNA Stand For?

This one is complicated. During 'The Wang Four Incident', be on the lookout for an elevator that doesn't appear on your map – follow the path it leads you on and eventually you'll find Orthmeyer's key card. Go back to 'Asylum Aftermath' and use the card to open the two doors you'll find in the level. Near the Golden Desert Eagles, you'll find another surprise – there are tanks here with clones of various characters from the game. What does it all mean?!

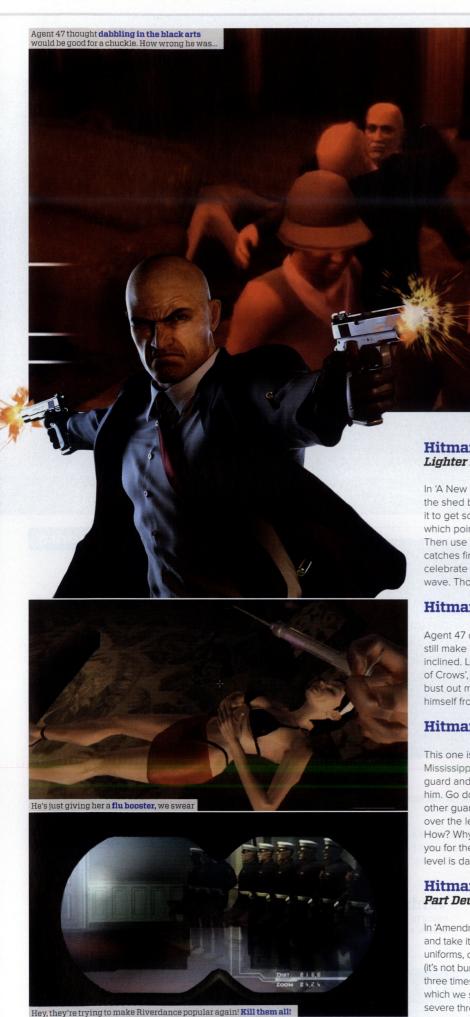
# Hitman 2: Dopefish Lives!

The 'dopefish' from the *Commander Keen* series really gets around, having appeared in one form or another in a surprisingly huge number of games since his first appearance in 1991's Secret of the Oracle. The 'second dumbest fish alive' appears as a desk ornament in 'The Jacuzzi Job', sitting on Charlie's desk in the Jacuzzi room. Just because he's a gamer doesn't mean you don't have to kill Charlie, though.

#### Hitman Contracts: This One Is Just Weird

If you love cult web-comic *Pokey The Penguin* as much as we do, you're one of the (probably very few) people who will get a kick out of this. In 'Slaying the Dragon', find the Ying-Yang symbol billboard (look up), and then shoot the white circle within the black section with a sniper rifle. An information box will pop up: "Hello? Observe the contents of my easter egg, small child!" Now, go and find the triad negotiators at the park, and they'll have speech bubbles from a specific *Pokey the Penguin* comic sticking out of their heads. How much sleep deprivation do you think inspired this one?





#### Hitman: Blood Money: Still, Where Did The Lighter Fluid Come From?

In 'A New Life', steal lighter fluid from both the basement and the shed by the pool, then steal the pool boy's uniform and use it to get some alone time with the target's wife in her room (at which point you can steal her necklace, completing an objective). Then use both cans of fluid on the barbecue so that the wife catches fire when she tries to use it, and watch as the FBI dudes celebrate her fiery performance with clapping and a Mexican wave. Those weirdos.

#### Hitman: Blood Money: Killer Moves

Agent 47 doesn't exactly have moves like Jaggar, but you can still make him get down and boogie in Blood Money if you're so inclined. Leave 47 idle on the dance floor in any club in 'A Murder of Crows', or at the wedding in 'Til Death Do Us Part', and he'll bust out moves so awkward your dad would blush and excuse himself from the room.

#### Hitman: Blood Money: Argh! Zombies!

This one is wonderfully strange. At the start of the 'Death on the Mississippi' level, take a left, run up the stairs to your right, kill the guard and throw his body over the right rail in the room behind him. Go downstairs, kill the Gator Gang member following the other guard, drag him back to the same room and dump his body over the left rail. And now everyone on the boat is a zombie! How? Why? We may never know, but they'll mindlessly beat at you for the rest of the level. Also, the paper at the end of this level is dated 'Smarch', because Blood Money is amazing.

#### Hitman: Blood Money: Killer Moves, Part Deux

In 'Amendment XXV', steal the old lady's briefcase at the start and take it with you into the White House (by stealing a bunch of uniforms, of course). Walk through into the big hall, find the fireplace (it's not burning), and throw the briefcase at the wall to the left of it three times. All the guards will line up and perform the Riverdance, which we suppose is a perfectly logical response to a potentially severe threat to national security.



# intermission

#### MUST WATCH

#### Batman: The Dark Knight Returns - Part 2 (M)

DIRECTOR: JAY OLIVA CAST: PETER WELLER, MARK VALLEY, ARIEL WINTER, MICHAEL EMERSON, DAVID SELBY, WADE WILLIAMS AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY, DVD

ased on the groundbreaking 1986 graphic novel by Frank Miller, Batman emerges after a 10 year absence to retake Gotham's crime soaked streets as a viscous new gang called The Mutants terrorises the city. Whilst battling advancing years and a few all-stars from his rogues gallery, Batman and a newly recruited (female) Robin methodically pick the muties apart one by one. With Reagan still in The White House, the Cold War is in full swing. After a Russian nuke detonates in the upper atmosphere, the subsequent EMP blast renders the entire United States electronically impotent. As lawlessness runs rampant, only one city remains unaffected: Gotham. A vigilante-led police force proves to be an embarrassment to his administration, forcing Reagan to send the most potent weapon in his arsenal, Superman, to take down the Batman once and for all

Watch this if you like The Dark Knight

**Verdict** An exceptional adaptation of one of the most critically acclaimed graphic novels of all time.







# Bait (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: KIMBLE RENDALL CAST: XAVIER SAMUEL, SHARNI VINSON, RICHARD BRANCATISANO, JULIAN MCMAHON AVAILABLE: (RENT/OWN) \$6.99 4.2GB (HD), \$5.99/\$24.99 1.1GB (SD)

'A tsunami just flipped the foodchain' is the tagline for this B horror movie, a joint venture between Australian and Singaporean cast and crew. The premise is that a bunch of impossibly pretty supermarket workers, their friends and some robbers are trapped inside a store after a freak wave dumped a few snap-happy sharks into aisle 2, right next to the tinned beans and corn. It's about as corny as a tin of the stuff, too, with

some heavy overacting and a few shock moments designed for cheap scares. Still, it has a certain charm and ends up being intentionally funny.

**Verdict** You know what you're going to get before the title screen: cheap scares, a few laughs and lots of blood.



#### PlayStation. Store

# ► TOP TEN Movies on Demand



- 1 Total Recall Sony Pictures
- 2 The Expendables 2
  Roadshow Films
- 3 The Bourne Legacy Universal Pictures
- 4 The Campaign Warner
  Bros
- 5 **Ted** Universal Pictures
- The Dark Knight Rises
  Warner Bros.
- 7 **Lockout** Roadshow Films
- 8 A Thousand Words
  Paramount
- 9 The Amazing Spider-Man Sony Pictures
- 10 Brave Disney

# Now available to rent or own on PlayStation. Store



#### Argo (M)

DIRECTOR: BEN AFFLECK CAST: BEN AFFLECK, BRIAN CRANSTON, ALAN ARKIN, JOHN GOODMAN AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

In 1978, radical militants stormed the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, taking the majority of its staff hostage in direct retaliation for the United States harbouring Iran's deposed Shah. Six staff managed to flee to the Canadian Embassy, and the C.I.A. pull out all the stops to covertly whisk them out of the country. The plan? Send in specialist Tony Mendez (Affleck) under the guise of a movie producer scouting locations for the next Hollywood blockbuster, passing off the escapees as members of the film's crew. Based on the Iran Hostage Crisis, with some obvious artistic license, Affleck again handles dual roles of lead and director brilliantly, balancing extremely tense moments with dark humour. Enthralling.

Watch this if you like Syriana

**Verdict** A rock solid addition to Affleck's portfolio, proving again he's far more bankable when directing





## Berserk Movie 1 -The Egg of the King (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: TOSHIYUKI KUBOOKA CAST: HIROAKI IWANAGA, TAKAHIRO SAKURAI, TOA YUKINARI, KENTA MIYAKE AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

It's not just big Hollywood flicks like Spider-Man and Hulk that are getting early reboots these days - several prominent anime franchises are getting do-overs, too. The new series of Berserk movies streamlines the plot of the original manga, but keeps the overall vibe: a tale of bromance and war in an epic fantasy world. Unlike most medieval-themed anime shows, Berserk presents a realistic take on the era, an impoverished and superstitious time when life was nasty, brutal, and short. Cel-shaded CGI is used extensively to render cavalry charges, massed infantry battles, and the gory rampages of the protagonist, a moody loner called 'Guts.'

Watch this if you like: Conan, Game of Thrones

Verdict Armies of knights battle until they're knee-deep in gibs. This is what it's all about, folks.





### Killing Them Softly (MAI5+)

DIRECTOR: ANDREW DOMINIK CAST: BRAD PITT, SCOOT MCNAIRY, BEN MENDELSOHN, JAMES GANDOLFINI, RICHARD JENKINS, RAY LIOTTA AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

After three incompetent low-level criminals rob a high-stakes card game, local enforcer Jackie Cogan (Pitt) is brought in to get the money back and 'clean' up the mess. Interspersed between the intense violence and softer, more poignant moments comes a steady stream of commentary via radios or televisions in the background on the U.S. economic crisis providing an arcing metaphor throughout the course of the film. Pitt is in his element as Cogan, both subtle and uncompromisingly brutal. His scenes with fellow hitman Mickey are wonderfully awkward, bringing out a nuanced and beautifully broken performance from James Gandolfini.

Watch this if you like Natural Born Killers

Verdict Gritty and layered with a unique visual style and top-notch cast. Well worth a look.



## **Hellsing Ultimate** Collection (Eps1-4) (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: TOMOKAZU TOKORO CAST: FUMIKO ORIKASA, JOUJI NAKATA, NOBUO TOBITA, NORIO WAKAMOTO, YOSHIKO SAKAKIBARA **AVAILABLE ON:** 

Another well-implemented anime remake. The '90s version of Hellsing was both apocryphal and abysmal, but this new series of 45-minute eps is both true to the original manga and glorious to behold. Hellsing Ultimate is a spectacle – undead Nazis in zeppelins versus Alucard, a vampire bound to serve a top-secret SAS-style British demon-slaying special forces group. Alucard does not sparkle. He's more partial to transmogrifying into a jagged-edged shade full of staring eyeballs, slavering over necks as he gorges on blood, and ventilating his foes with jumbo automatic pistols. An orgy of psycho-sexual violence

Watch this if you enjoyed: Ninja Scroll

Verdict No fruity Twilight nonsense here - blood, gore, and diabolical fun.





#### Justified: Season 3<sub>m</sub>

DIRECTOR: VARIOUS CAST: TIMOTHY OLYPHANT, WALTON GOGGINS, NEAL MCDONOUGH, MYKELTI WILLIAMSON AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY/DVD

Elmore Leonard's modern-day Western continues with an explosive third season. After U.S. Marshall Raylan Givens (Olyphant) finally eliminates local Kentuckian criminal element. the Bennett clan, a new out-of-state adversary enters the fray. Exiled Mafioso Robert Quarles starts ruffling feathers aiming to make a fast and bloody grab for cash. His brash actions put him directly in the sights of Boyd Crowder (Goggins), who doesn't take kindly to criminal enterprises he doesn't get a piece of. If that wasn't enough, the opportunistic Ellstin Limehouse proves to be a contender. As the three factions square off, Raylan finds himself in the middle, using his badge and itchy trigger finger to keep the peace.

Watch this if you like Deadwood

Verdict Possibly the best season yet, filled with charismatic and entertaining characters.





## A Monster in Paris

DIRECTOR: BIBO BERGERON CAST: LUC BESSON, ADAM GOLDBERG, VANESSA PARADIS AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Now here's a surprise: an animated movie from France with an accessible story, allages appeal, likeable characters, solid story structure, great lighting and animation, and an upbeat, whimsical sense of adventure. Set against a backdrop of Paris in 1910, it introduces us to two young dudes, a projectionist and an inventor, who accidentally create a giant mutant flea that terrorises the city. But it turns out that the flea is amiable and musically gifted, and the real monster is a crooked police chief with political ambitions, a man who'll stop at nothing to slay the flea, and anyone who tries to stop him... The disc doesn't include the original French dialogue track, but the English dub is great.

Watch this if you liked: Ratatouille, Hugo

Verdict Steampunk shenanigans, slapstick, vaudeville, romance, and high adventure.





#### MUST SEE

# Django Unchained (MALS+)

DIRECTOR: QUENTIN TARANTINO CAST: JAMIE FOXX, CHRISTOPH WALTZ, LEONARDO DICAPRIO, KERRY WASHINGTON, SAMUEL L. JACKSON IN CINEMAS: NOW

aying homage to Sergio Leone's spaghetti
Westerns, *Django Unchained* is a blood-soaked
tale of revenge with Tarantino's trademark quirky
and often horrendously violent flair. Django (Foxx), a slave
being taken across country, crosses paths with German
bounty hunter Dr. King Schultz (Waltz), and his life is
changed forever.

Freed from the shackles of slavery, Django and Schultz come to an accord. They'll partner up for the Winter chasing down bounties to make their fortune and once the thaw melts turn their attention to finding Django's missing wife. So the rambunctious rapscallions set off leaving a swath of bloodied bodies in their wake. Once Spring has sprung they discover Django's true love has been sold to cruel plantation owner Calvin Candie (DiCaprio) and begin hatching a scheme to set her free.

While the entire cast does an excellent job Foxx and Waltz are clearly standouts. Foxx's proud and beautifully restrained Django is perfectly countered by Waltz's eminently charming and unbelievably likable Schultz. They are absolutely magnetic on screen together. The pacing of the first half of the film is extremely tight, loosening considerably in the second with some eccentric Tarantino tangents taking hold, particularly a strange Australian twist almost forcibly inserted in the final act. That said, *Django Unchained* is a definite return to form for Tarantino and easily the best film he's done in years.







# Gangster Squad (MA15+)

**DIRECTOR:** RUBEN FLEISCHER **CAST:** JOSH BROLIN, SEAN PENN, RYAN GOSLING, EMMA STONE, GIOVANNI RIBISI, ROBERT PATRICK, NICK NOLTE **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

## Jack Reacher (M)

**DIRECTOR:** CHRISTOPHER MCQUARRIE **CAST:** TOM CRUISE, ROSAMUND PIKE, RICHARD JENKINS, WERNER HERZOG, ROBERT DUVALL **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

om Cruise plays Jack Reacher, a brutal no-nonsense military investigator living life off the grid. Drawn back due to a gruesome mass murder committed by an ex-military sniper he's more than familiar with, James Barr, Reacher begins to uncover a larger conspiracy at play – and finds himself directly in the firing line.

Director Christopher McQuarrie has made some bold choices in *Jack Reacher*. Some work rather well and others not so much. Cruise does a fantastic job as Reacher; with his eye trained on all the angles he's got answers to questions you haven't even thought of yet. The brutal

and debilitating hand-to-hand combat is refreshing, evoking the same sort of well-trained precision Val Kilmer exhibited in *Spartan*.

The supporting cast doesn't fare nearly as well with Werner Herzog's menacing role as antagonist The Zec proving to be a highlight. The usually solid Rosamund Pike brings very little to her role as Barr's attorney other than an unrequited love interest for Reacher, and Robert Duvall seems thrown in for the sake of it.

Jack Reacher ticks all the right boxes but comes apart at the seams as it draws to a close.

hile Ruben Fleisher's debut Zombieland delivered a fresh take on the genre, his follow-ups have been steadily going downhill. 30 Minutes or Less failed to capture an audience and while Gangster Squad has an impressive cast and is often visually spectacular, there's little to it.

Inspired by events in 1940s Los Angeles it details a secret 'off the books' squad commissioned to dismantle brutal kingpin Mickey Cohen's (Penn) rapidly expanding empire. Incorruptible hard-arse Sgt. John O'Mara (Brolin) is charged with recruiting and leading this merry band of misfits. The crew is made up of the usual fare: a smooth talker (Gosling), the brains (Ribisi), a gunslinger (Patrick) and a few diverse choices to round out the team.

Unfortunately, Gangster Squad suffers from a wafer thin plot and profound lack of chemistry between everyone involved. It seems happy to merely jump from set piece to set-piece with no character development at all, hoping to wow the audience with how pretty and violent it is. A textbook example of style over substance.

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# Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

#### **FEB 2013**

Dead Space 3
Genre: Action Distributor: EA
Date: Feb 7

Aliens: Colonial Marines

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** Five Star Games Date: Feb 12



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: Feb 21



Crysis 3
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA
Date: Feb 21

#### Fist of the North Star: Ken's Rage 2

Genre: Fighting Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA Feb

#### **MARCH 2013**

#### PRE-ORDER Tomb Raider

Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: Mar 5

God of War: Ascension

Genre: Action Distributor: Sony Date: Mar 14



Genre: Shooter Distributor: QVS

Date: Mar 15

#### **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14**

Genre: Sports Distributor: EA

#### **BioShock Infinite**

Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K Games Date: Mar 26

#### COLLECTOR'S EDITION

# **Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2**

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2 takes the bulls-eye precision of its best-selling predecessor to new and exciting heights. Powered by the CryENGINE 3 engine, you once again step into the ghilliesuit of a special ops sniper to take down the enemy.

#### The Collector's Edition Includes:

- SteelBook copy of Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2
- Artbook with never-before-published illustrations
- Sniper tactics and history fanbook, developed in collaboration with military experts with combat experience
- Official soundtrack
- Bonus DLC including sniper rifles and four playable characters



EB Games \$98 JB Hi-Fi \$89 Estimated dispatch date: 15/3/13





Army of Two: The Devil's Cartel Genre: Action Distributor: EA Date: Mar 28

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: Mar 28

#### PRE-ORDER Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 3

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA Mar

#### **Metro Last Light**

Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ
Date: TBA Mar

#### South Park: The Stick of Truth

Genre: RPG Distributor: THQ Date: TBA Mar

#### Fuse

**Genre:** Shooter **Distributor:** EA **Date**: TBA Mar

#### Splinter Cell Blacklist

Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBA Mar

#### Young Justice: Legacy

Genre: Sports Distributor: EA
Date: TBA Mar

#### Star Trek

**Genre:** Action **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA Mar

#### APRIL 2013

#### Dead Island: Riptide

Genre: Shooter/RPG Distributor: AIE Date: Apr 23



#### Injustice: Gods Among Us

**Genre:** Fighting **Distributor:** Warner Bros. **Date:** TBA Apr

#### **MAY 2013**

#### The Last of Us

Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: Sony Date: TBA May 7

#### Remember Me

Genre: Action-Adventure
Distributor: Capcom Date: TBA May

#### **TBA 2013**



#### **Grand Theft Auto V**

Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar Date: TBA 2013

#### GRID 2

**Genre:** Racing **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA 2013

#### The Last Guardian

Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony Date: TBA 2013

#### **Lost Planet 3**

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: TBA 2013

#### Dust 514

Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA

#### **Date:** TBA 2013

**Brothers in Arms Furious 4** 

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBA 2013

#### **Date:** 1 Dit

Doom 4
Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBC

Date: TBA 2013



#### Arcania: Gothic 4

Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

#### **Beyond: Two Souls**

Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony Date: TBA 2013

#### Dragonball Z Budokai HD Collection

Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

#### Prey 2

Genre: Shooter Distributor: AIE Date: TBA 2013

#### Deadpool

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision

Date: TBA 2013

#### **Watch Dogs**

Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBA 2013

#### Star Wars 1313

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision

Date: TBA 2013

#### Agent

Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
Date: TBA 2013

#### Dragon's Crown

Genre: Action Distributor: TBA Date: TBA 2013

#### **Final Fantasy Versus XIII**

Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

#### Persona 4: Arena

**Genre:** Fighting **Distributor:** TBA **Date:** TBA 2013



#### Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco

Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA 2013

#### Tales of Xillia

Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA Date: TBA 2013

#### Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2

**Genre**: Action-Adventure **Distributor**: Mindscape **Date**: TBA 2013

#### **Rainbow Six: Patriots**

**Genre:** Shooter **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBA 2013

#### Devil's Third

Genre: Action Distributor: TBA Date: TBA 2013

#### **Warrior's Lair**

Genre: Action-RPG Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

#### Serious Sam: BFE

Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

#### Final Fantasy XIV Online

**Genre:** RPG **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBA 2013

#### **Backbreaker Vengeance**

**Genre:** Sports **Distributor:** TBA **Date:** TBA 2013

#### Dark Souls II

Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013



#### **LEGO Marvel Super Heroes**

Genre: Action Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBA 2013

# AMC's The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct

Genre: Sports Distributor: EA
Date: TBA 2013

# PS Vita Releases



#### **FEB 2013**

#### Persona 4: Golden

Genre: RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: February 22

#### Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA Feb

#### Dead or Alive 5 Plus

TBA 2013

Genre: Fighter Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBA 2013

#### Duet 514

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony
Date: TBA 2013

#### Final Fantasy X

Genre: RPG Distributor: Square-Enix Date: TBA 2013

#### Killzone: Mercenary

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony Date: TBA 2013

#### Zone of the Enders HD Collection

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBA 2013

#### Rugby Challenge

Genre: Sports Distributor: TBA
Date: TBA 2013

#### Castlevania Mirror of Fate

Genre: Action-Adventure

Distributor: Konami Date: TBA 2013

#### When Vikings Attack!

Genre: Action Distributor: Sony

Date: TBA 2013



#### Phantasy Star Online 2

Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA Date:

#### Tearaway

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony

Date: TBA 2013



#### **Soul Sacrifice**

Genre: Action Distributor: Sony Date: TBA 2013

#### Dragon's Crown

Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBA 2013

#### SPECIAL EDITIONS

#### Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 3



#### The Will of Fire (pictured) and True Despair editions include:

- 16cm-tall figurine from Banpresto
- A2 double sided Will of Fire (or True Despair) Edition poster
- Premium trading card
- Game Soundtrack
- 5 Exclusive costumes DLC
- Exclusive Goku costume DLC

The Naruto Shippuden Ultimate
Ninja Storm series is back in 2013,
celebrating the return of highly
awaited boss battles and welcoming

masked Man and Nine-Tails assault on the Leaf Village for the first time in a videogame, the story mode will let you live the most recent events of the anime with a degree of faithfulness never-before-seen. More immersive, more faithful and more extreme, Naruto Shippuden Ultimate Ninja Storm 3 will offer the most epic Naruto experience ever seen!

brand new features to revamp

the game experience. Introducing

EB Games \$108 Estimated dispatch date: 7/3/13

#### ABOUT THE INDEX

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Check out our handy index of all the PS3 and PSV titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparitive quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

#### ACTION

#### Alien Breed 3: Descent

Top-down twin-stick affair that doesn't do enough to improve upon its predecessors.

#### Armored Core V

FROM SOFTWARE Repetitive and needlessly complex.

#### Army of Two: The 40th Day

EA MONTREAL Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original Army of Two.

#### Asura's Wrath with QTEs. Bleh.

CYBERCONNECT 2 There's not much game here and it's packed

#### RECOMMENDED Bayonetta

PLATINUM GAMES It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

#### & Beyond Good &

Evil HD UBISOFT

Still one of the most charming games ever.

#### NEW & Payer Big Sky Infinity

BOSSBADDIE A poorly thought-out twin-stick shooter. Looks alright, plays better on PS Vita.

#### Binary Domain

YAKUZASTUDIO Cool ideas, embarrassing dialogue.

#### Payditation RECOMMENDED

BloodRayne: Betrayal WAYFORWARD

A classy and colourful beat-'em-up that rewards exploration.

#### Transfer BreakQuest: Extra Evolution

BEATSHAPES

Tries to break the brick-breaking formula but suffers from plodding gameplay.

#### RECOMMENDED Castle Crashers

THE BEHEMOTH Violent but classy side-scrolling cartoon

RPG-action. Best played in co-op.

#### RECOMMENDED Child of Eden DENTERTAINMENT

You need a Move controller to wring the best out of this weird and wonderful blaster

#### The Club BIZARRECREATIONS

Original, compulsive and fun.

RECOMMENDED Dead Rising 2:

#### Off The Record

CAPCOM VANCOUVER

If you missed it first time around, grab it now

#### Devil May Cry HD Collection

CAPCOM

A bit lazy. 720p gameplay, low-res cutscenes.

#### Devil May Cry 4

CAPCOM

Memorable bosses but prepare to backtrack.

#### NEW RECOMMENDED DmC: Devil May Cry 8

NIN.IA THEORY

Makes the original seem cringeworthy by comparison. Remarkable and frantic

#### Paydution RECOMMINDED Double Dragon

WAYFORWARD

Neon

Scott Pilgrim does it better.

#### Earth Defense Force:

Insect Armageddon VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE

Ugly, repetitive and about 10 years out of date.

El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron 8 VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE Breathtakingly beautiful and inventive

The Expendables 2 Videogame 4 ZOOTFLY

#### A disaster from start to finish. Booooooring

RECOMMENDED Final Fight: Double

#### Impact

PROPER GAMES Forget about Magic Sword; play Final Fight

#### RECOMMENDED Galaga Legions DX 8

NAMCOBANDAIPARTNERS Bullet hell made pretty

#### RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters:

The Video Game TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

#### Heavy Fire: Afghanistan

MASTIFF

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A technical travesty. Full of brown.



#### **Hitman: Absolution**

**DEVELOPER: IO INTERACTIVE DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

"Cleverly balances stealth and action for both newbies and long-time fans, while the narrative challenges even the most pacifistic player to pull the trigger."

#### RECOMMENDED House of the Dead: Overkill - Extended Cut

HEADSTRONG GAMES

Has its tongue so far in its cheek it's almost poking out the other side. Requires Move.

#### Hunted: The Demon's Forge INXII.E

A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

#### ESSENTIAL Jetpack Joyride

HALFBRICK/BEATSHAPES

#### Insanely addictive and an instant buy if you

haven't played it on smartphones already.

#### **ESSENTIAL** Just Cause 2 AVALANCHE STUDIOS

Parachutes, Grappling hooks, Stripper zeppelins. An insane action game

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days

INTERACTIVE

Clever visuals, dull game.

Lollipop Chainsaw

Witless, puerile, and irredeemably dull. You'd be right to expect more from Suda51.

#### Midway Arcade Origins MIDWAY

GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE

Over 30 different ways to waste your time. You're better off burning \$40.

#### Ninja Gaiden Sigma

TEAM NINJA Violent but ace, despite its age

#### RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2

TEAM NINJA

A sexy and rock-hard title but the gore's been cut.

#### One Piece: Pirate Warriors TECMO KOEL

Dynasty Warriors in a new skin. Cool story, but you can play this with your buttocks

#### RECOMMENDED Pac-Man Championship **Edition DX**

NAMCOBANDAL

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A revolutionary sequel that will put blisters on your eyeballs and thumbs. Hypnotic

#### Paydiction RECOMMENDED PixelJunk

SideScroller Q-GAMES

Old-school fun meets new age design.

#### RECOMMENDED Prototype 2

RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT Dumb plot, fantastic gory action. Loads of fun.

#### Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

INSOMNIAC GAMES Chaotic and confusing with four players, and a bit dull in single player.

#### Red Faction: Armageddon

VOLITION, INC.

Brown, corridor-based action that will leave you snoring. Get Guerrilla instead.

#### RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla

VOLITION INC.

The best destruction effects ever, hands down, with loads to see and do

RECOMMENDED Renegade Ops AVALANCHE STUDIOS

A sleek twin-stick shooter with split screen!

#### Resident Evil: The Darkside

Chronicles CAPCOM

On-rails lightgun rehash of Resi 2 with bits of lore thrown in. The too-shaky camera sucks.

#### RECOMMENDED Resident Evil: The

Umbrella Chronicles CAPCOM

Better camera and broader subject matter

#### that includes Resi O. Uses Move.

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City 7

#### SLANT SIX GAMES

Buggy in single player, but gets better online with mates. Unresponsive and ugly at times.

# IIII .

#### **Retro City Rampage**

**DEVELOPER: VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT** DISTRIBUTOR: VBLANK ENTERTAINMENT PLAYERS: 1

"A fiendish send-up of GTA with more references than you can poke a DeLorean at. Challenging, tight, addictive - and it works on both PS3 and PS Vita."

#### RECOMMENDED Saints Row 3

VOLITION INC. Big, brash and unapologetically dumb fun.

#### Scott Pilgrim vs. the World

URISOFT Distinctly old-school. Needs co-op partners.

#### May Station Shank 2

KLEIENTERTAINMENT

Better combat but disappointing graphics compared to the original. Still cool, though.

#### NEW Market RECOMMENDED Sine Mora

DIGITAL REALITY

Really beautiful and very tough side-scrolling shoot-'em-up. Teases relentlessly.

#### Skylanders Giants

TOYS FOR BOB

As great as the first game and backwards compatible, but needed to evolve more.

#### RECOMMENDED Sleeping Dogs

UNITED FRONT GAMES

Best-in-class combat and great presentation. You'll absolutely curse the vehicles, though.

#### RECOMMENDED Sniper Elite V2

REBELLION

A few rough edges here and there but the sniping is magnificent. Also, you can kill Hitler.

#### The Simpsons Arcade Game

KUNAMI

One old-school 'classic' that we could do without. Not as cool you once thought.

#### RECOMMENDED SOCOM: Special Forces

ZIPPER INTERACTIVE Great online with Move and a Sharp Shooter

Spec Ops: The Line YAGER Tries to depict the horrors of war but fails.

#### Gets better just before the credits roll.

RECOMMENDED Starhawk

SANTA MONICA STUDIO Addictive multi, more than competent splitscreen. Buy it.

#### RECOMMENDED Transformers: Fall of

Cybertron HIGH MOON STUDIOS

This is a must-get for fans. Two steps forward and one step back from War for Cybertron.

8

#### RECOMMENDED Vanquish

PLATINUM GAMES

Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

#### Paydration RECOMMENDED Velocity

FUTURLAB

A hypnotic racing-puzzler-shoot-'em-up and it's less than \$10. Challenging and stylish.

#### Wonderbook: Book of Spells

SONY

One part readalong, one part Movewagglefest with a Hogwarts flavour.

# Metacretin: radical hatred of the games you like

Website: metacritic.com Game: DmCReviewer: ExclusiveGamer Score: 0 This game is the saddest piece of crap I've ever come across. The combat is flawed by trying to be "fast paced" but has constant slow motion time every time you "evade" an attack which only slows down the game flow a lot. And the writing is the worst thing I've seen since a bad Google translation. The profane unintelligent, unfunny, uncatchy, unwitty writing is the main reason this game fails. It sounds like a twelve-year-old wrote the script

Zone of the Enders HD Collection

Kojima's mechs-and-melodrama duo are all dolled up but still feels thin.

#### **ACTION-ADVENTURE**

3D Dot Game Heroes

FROM SOFTWARE If you pine for the past you'll feel like this was made just for you.

Alice: Madness Returns SPICY HORSE

Marries great ideas with average platforming

The Amazing Spider-Man BEENOX

Rips off Arkham City but lacks the depth.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed Revelations

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Feels more like a (really big) expansion than a true sequel. *Brotherhood* is better.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed III

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Looks better and is more ambitious than its predecessors with only a few niggles.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8 ROCKSTEADYSTUDIOS

Really delivers the goods, and even though the sequel's out you need this too.



Batman: Arkham City 10

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. PLAYERS: 1

"Everyone else needs to take note: this is how a superhero game should make you feel. It's endlessly creative, perfectly moody and technically flawless."

Blades of Time

**GAINJIN ENTERTAINMENT** Simplistic combat, stupid AI, woeful levels.

RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend

DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS

Must play, though the RTS bits are a bit crap.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania:

Lords of Shadow MERCURY STEAM

A truly solid romp with tasty combat.

PlayStation Datura SANTA MONICA STUDIOS

A proof-of-concept Move title that's little more than cobbled-together puzzles. Clunky. RECOMMENDED Dead Island

TECHLAND Bogus script and ugly but undeniably fun.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space

EAREDWOOD SHORES Super tense. Modern, survival horror.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2

VISCERAL GAMES

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What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved

NINJA THEORY A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's Monkey.

ESSENTIAL God of War III

SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection

SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES Age has not dimished the impact of these PS2 titles. A must-get.

RECOMMENDED

God of War Collection Volume II

READY AT DAWN

Meticulously updated and pretty to look at

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV

ROCKSTAR NORTH The scope and scale of GTAIV is remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto:

Episodes from Liberty City

ROCKSTAR NORTH

Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and an explosive shotgun? Yes.

Trophecy Hydrophobia: Prophecy

DARK ENERGY DIGITAL Shoddy game, great water tech.

Paydiation RECOMMENDED I Am Alive

UBISOFT

The game that was retail but now PSN only is dark, constantly tense and very satisfying.

RECOMMENDED in FAMOUS 2

SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Batman 2: DC Super

Heroes

TRAVELLER'S TALES While its predecessor felt old this feels fresh.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7

TRAVELLER'S TALES

You'd have to be a fan to get this and 1-4

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones:

The Original Adventures

TRAVELLER'S TALES

A joyous adaptation; one of the best.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Lord of the Rings

TRAVELLER'S TALES A solid and rather large LEGO outing.

9

Expertly weaves in bits from the films

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom

**GAME REPUBLIC** A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned. MafiaII

8

10

SKCZECH Great when it's on fire but the world feels empty. Has been well and truly bested.

RECOMMENDED Max Payne 3

ROCKSTAR

A riveting rollercoaster where each gunfight is a ballet of bullets. Superbly atmospheric.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4:

Guns of the Patriots KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS

es, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane

RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD

Collection KUNAMI

MGS2 has aged. Snake Eater is still all class and Peace Walker rocks.

Ninja Gaiden 3

TEAM NINJA

Mind you don't impale yourself on the difficulty spike. Fans will lap it up.

PlayStation RESOMMENDED Okami HD

CAPCOM Got 40 hours spare? Get this. It's absolutely

beautiful and has aged spectacularly well. Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Harks back to the original Prince. You've been here before and the world's moved on.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time

INSOMNIACGAMES

Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction

INSOMNIACGAMES A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.

**ESSENTIAL** Red Dead Remption

ROCKSTARSANDIEGO

A sweeping epic. Grab the Game of the Year edition for maximum value.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 4

CAPCOM A straight port and not as pretty as it was, but

it's still great.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 CAPCOM

A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 6

CAPCOM

Starts out slow and then ramps up. Worth buying for Mercenaries mode.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur

PANDEMIC STUDIOS Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

Shadows of the Damned

GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay from two geniuses of design. A real shame.

Silent Hill: Downpour

VATRAGAMES True to the pants-browning original, but

technical problems and stupid Al tarnish it.

Silent Hill HD Collection KONAMI

True evil never dies; it gets a decent facelift.

THE WORKSHOP A genuinely fun Move title geared towards kids. Fun, lively tone with wink-wink writing.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's

Splinter Cell: Double Agent UBISOFT SHANGHAI Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10

NAUGHTYDOG

This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames

10

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**Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception** 

DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1 - 12

"Impeccable in every regard. The action ramps up and up, taking you on foot-chases to teethgritting firefights and beyond to stunning set pieces. Totally complements and enhances the other games in the series."

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4

CS1 TEAM One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

**ADVENTURE** 

The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn UBISOFT MONTPELLIER You'll get a kick out of co-op.

RECOMMENDED Back to the

Future: The Game Episode 1 TELLTALEGAMES

Fairly simple puzzles but, Great Scott, it looks

and feels amazing.

RECOMMENDED Heavy Rain QUANTIC DREAM Not quite a revolution but very clever and

very well-crafted

Physication Journey

THATGAMECOMPANY Stunningly realised. A game unlike any other

and perhaps the friendliest multiplayer



# THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation. Store



FINAL FANTASY VII

PLAYERS: 1

he RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, Final Fantasy VII is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



DRIVER DEVELOPER: REFLECTION INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1

The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car hat now but when Driver debuted



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG PLAYERS: 1

PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-



SYPHON FILTER PLAYERS:

it again and tell us this awesome comeback.



MEDIEVIL Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it better than most since



uantic Drear

LOCATION: PARIS, FRANCE FOUNDED: 1997 BEST KNOWN FOR: HEAVY RAIN

n the mid '90s, novelist David Cage was keen to adapt one of his written works Omikron - The Nomad Soul into a video game so took the next logical step, and founded the development studio Quantic Dream. After making Omikron for the PC and Dreamcast the studio lent a hand to the 2004 film Immortal, an animated sci-fi which blended live actors with computer generated surroundings. His next work appeared on the Playstation 2. remembered as either Fahrenheit locally or as *Indigo Prophecy* in the United States. Fahrenheit received numerous awards for its (then) unique interactive storytelling.

With critical success under its belt, QD increased its numbers for the PlayStation 3 exclusive Heavy Rain to 110 employees. Categorised by many as more of an interactive movie than video game, it nevertheless enjoyed a critical reception, scoring a Game of the Year award from CNN and industry recognition for its story and technical innovation. Of the three million or so people who have played Heavy Rain, roughly 75% have finished it (the industry average for completed video games is 20 - 25%). A movie adaptation is also in the works with Warner Bros

Cage is regarded by many as an industry visionary for his innovative

techniques and emotionally immersive stories. "Games always explore the same things," said Cage in an interview with British newspaper The Guardian. "They're about being powerful, being the good guys against the bad guys - that's a very tiny part of what can be done. There are so many other stories to tell, so many other emotions to trigger". Just last year he claimed the "Industry would die if it doesn't try more to be innovative and to come up with new ideas."

It's not just a game development studio, however, as QD offers full motion capture support, shooting the body, voice and face at the same time. The technology was used in the short film Kara about an android who discovers she can think, and will be used in the upcoming PlayStation 3 exclusive Beyond: Two Souls, expanding the studio up to 180 employees.

Beyond: Two Souls features actress Ellen Page as a young woman connected to a paranormal entity and is expected to release later this year. "We want to continue to explore and take risks and be ambitious for our titles and maybe fail, but maybe succeed and discover something," said Cage in an interview with GameTrailers.

#### ESSENTIAL L.A. Noire

TEAM BONDI

Slow-paced, incredibly detailed and wellexecuted. Unlike anything else available.

#### Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust TEAM17 SOFTWARE

An amazing new low for this generation. Not even 'so bad it's good', it's just awful.

#### \* RECOMMENDED Stacking

DOUBLEFINE

A truly unique concept and a real brain tickler

#### The Testament of Sherlock Holmes FROGWARES

Slow-paced and challenging, one for those who've always dreamt of being Holmes

#### RECOMMENDED The Walking Dead -

TELLTALE GAMES

Emotional and gripping storytelling – the whole series is astounding. Only available on the US PSN. Sorry.

#### FIGHTING

Anarchy Reigns PLATINUM GAMES

Lots of potential, but it needs online players.

#### Dead or Alive 5 TEAM NIN.IA

A slick, beautiful mash of fighting polish and icky sleaze, but evolves into a frantic mess.

#### Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat 345 GAMES

Real people, ridiculous combat. Sun Tzu versus William Wallace? Sure!

#### Dragon Ball Z Budokai HD Collection

Budokai 3 is a highlight but this is archaic

#### Marvel vs Capcom: Origins

CAPCOM/IRON GALAXY STUDIOS Two old titles in one outdated and boring package. Yawn.

#### RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat

NETHERREALM A sterling, yet banned, return to form. Unless you live in NZ.

#### Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations

CYBERCONNECT 2 Stunning animation, but the biffo is a chore

#### PlayStation All-Stars Batte Royale SUPERBOT ENTERTAINMENT

A reliable brawler but the lineup's lacking. It needed more big names - where's Snake, or Cloud!?

#### RECOMMENDED Skullgirls

REVENGELABS

Wacky and weird but you'll love it

#### RECOMMENDED SoulCalibur V

NAMCO BANDAI

Great weapons-based combat for online play, but single player is a bit thin. IV still rocks

#### RECOMMENDED Street Fighter III -

Third Strike Online Edition IRON GALAXY

10

Very different from IV and utterly brilliant.

#### RECOMMENDED Street Fighter X Tekken 9

CAPCOM Ridiculously entertaining and well-made, but the DLC strategy blows.

#### Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition 8

CAPCOM For first time purchasers only. You'll probably

#### find this or SSFIV on the cheap somewhere. RECOMMENDED Tekken Tag

Tournament 2 NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

Innovative and challenging. Tonnes of characters, including a few newbies.

#### RECOMMENDED IIItimate Marvel vs.

Cancom 3 CAPCOM

Blinding action with a roster you deserve.

#### \* PayStation Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown

SEGA

Fast and clean, but the tasty extras are DLC.

7

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YUKE'S FUTURE MEDIA CREATORS Comprehensively spoiled by sloppy controls. It hasn't improved much on last year, either.

#### FLIGHT

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon PROJECT ACES

Reality-bending fare that lacks depth

Apache: Air Assault

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though.

#### RECOMMENDED Birds of Steel

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT Hardcore stuff. The IL2 heritage shines through, but it's not as pretty as it once was

#### Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII 3

MADCATZ

A comprehensive failure. Unimaginative, glitchy, and it looks terrible.

#### ESSENTIAL IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prev

GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT

Packed with little details across the board.

#### Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters

TRICKSTAR GAMES

Fifth-rate design and presentation.

#### RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 8 UBISOFT ROMANIA

Way better mission design over the first title

and good variety too.

#### Ton Gun: Hard Lock

HEADSTRONG GAMES

Limp and aimless. A trap laced with nostalgia that goes into a flat spin quickly.

## THE BEST **PSP** GAMES



#### GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D *GTA* just like the PS2 versions, on PSF – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. Yes, we're totally serious



#### MONSTER HUNTER DEVELOPER: CAPCOM PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates



#### WIPEOUT PULSE **DEVELOPER:** SCE LIVERPOOL **PLAYERS:** 1-8

it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason WipEout just works – and this is proof. Depending on this just pips the likes of Burnout Legends and Gran Turismo for best racing game on PSP.



#### METAL GEAR SOLID PEACE WALKER DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS

A proper, well-produced and must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss



#### GOD OF WAR: DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN PLAYERS: 1

Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and crucial part of the saga you really

#### MUSIC

Guitar Hero 5

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack HARMONIX Bare-bones stuff, but fully exportable.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band HARMONIX

Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2 FREESTYLEGAMES Some great improvements and excellent mixes.

пэсоммэхоээ Green Day: Rock Band Very good. Up there with The Beatles: Rock

Band and Guitar Hero: Metallica.

NEVERSOFT The last in the series with a dud tracklist.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica The best in the series since Guitar Hero III.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock Functional, but it's missed the mark

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 3 UBISOFT You need PlayStation Move and a lot of enthusiam to get the most out of this.

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 4 As silly and fun as the last instalment.

LEGO Rock Band HARMONIX/TRAVELLER'S TALES Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though 8

4

3

PixelJunk 4am 5 OGAMES Move controls are poorly implemented. A pity

Physicalon RECOMMENDED Retro/Grade 24 CARET GAMES A shooter-cum-rhythm game that's loaded

with lasers. RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3

Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

Rock Band Blitz HARMONIX Once again an extensive library of Rock Band DLC will ensure you enjoy this.

RECOMMENDED Rocksmith UBISOFT More an educational tool than game, but it works really, really well.

8 SingStar SCE LONDON STUDIO Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

#### PARTY

Ape Escape JAPAN STUDIO

A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.

SCELONDONSTUDIO Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Kung Fu Rider JAPAN STUDIO Waggle-tastic. A terrible Move game

PlayStation Move Heroes NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

Sports Champions 2 ZINDAGIGAMES The original was a must-have. This isn't. Start the Party! Save the World!

SUPERMASSIVE GAMES A Move game for the very young

Yoostar 2 BLITZ GAME STUDIOS Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

#### PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

6 PayStation Babel Rising MANDO PRODUCTIONS This tower-defence god-game has a spirited concept but winds up being soulless.

Manager ESSENTIAL Braid 10 HOTHEAD GAMES Probably the best-ever example of how to implement time-bending physics.

RECOMMENDED Catherine ATLUS Niche and weird in places, but compelling,

PayStation RECOMMENDED Chime A music-based puzzler where you need to slot in blocks to rockin' (and chilled) beats.

RECOMMENDED de Blob 2 BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT
Surprisingly fun, fresh and colourful. Get it if you can: Blue Tongue no longer exist

Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two JUNCTION POINT STUDIOS Way better with Move and with two players, but it's a bit tricky for young 'uns.

RECOMMENDED Flight Control FIREMINT One of the best Move games ever.

Taylor Hell Yeah! Wrath of the Dead Rabbit ARKEDO A fun cartoon journey packed with blood.

RECOMMENDED Jak & Daxter Trilogy PS2 mascots prove they are evergreen. A truly fine HD makeover

RECOMMENDED Joe Danger 2 HELLOGAMES A platformer-puzzler with bundles of charm.

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever NAMCO BANDAI Joyful, though the series is showing its age



LittleBigPlanet 2 DIA MOLECULE PUBLISHER: DEVELOPER: MEDIA SONY PLAYERS: 1-4

"A truly charming platformer. Incredibly innovative and neverending; you could sink a lifetime into creating anything you want for this and never be done."

Carytanion NiGHTS into Dreams HD SEGA (SHANGHAI) SOFTWARE A game from yesterday riddled with cracks.

Marting GEGOWINIMOSE Outland HOUSEMARQUE Liberally copies bits from old-school Castlevania but it does it well. Very clever.

7 MINORITY Deep, affecting subject, but predictable and simple. Not cheap, either.

5 MIGHT AND DELIGHT Frustrating and not much fun at all. You will swear... a lot.

PayStation RECOMMENDED Quantum AIRTIGHT GAMES If you're expecting more Portal, stop. Very cool ideas marred by frustrating platforming.

RECOMMENDED The Ratchet & Clank Trilogy INSOMNIAC/IDOLMINDS Excellent value for money and still refined.

#### Leisure Suit Larry - this is not a joke

Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust is the only game in the history of OPS to ever earn a lowly score of 1. However, in May last year, a Kickstarter project eclipsed its funding target to bring the Lothario back in an old-fashioned point-and-click adventure, because that was the time when Larry was actually funny and not some worthless back. It's on track to be released some time between now and late March. and Larry creator Al Lowe has also been involved with its development.



RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins UBISOFT MONTPELLIER Utterly gorgeous. Truly great with friends

RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

Physicalon RECOMMENDED Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode II SEGA Better than Episode I with tweaked physics

Also includes Tails, and he's actually useful.

Sonic Generations

SONIC TEAM Starts out great and falters towards the end. RECOMMENDED Sound Shapes

QUEASYGAMES A music-based romp that embraces user generated content. On Vita, too. Very good

\* Providence The Unfinished Swan GIANT SPARROW Short, but beautiful and endearing. You'll need a Move controller, though.

Paydiation RECOMMENDED Trine 2 FROZENBYTE Puzzles and platforming wrapped up with gorgeous three-player arcade action.

RECOMMENDED When Vikings Attack CLEVERBEANS Fiendishly difficult but you'll love it for that

May PlayStation Wizorb

TRIBUTE GAMES A modern take on Arkanoid with magic and special powers. Dirt cheap, Great on Vita!

#### RACING/DRIVING

Blur BIZARRE CREATIONS A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise CRITERION GAMES Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode

ASU anotative Dedukimmoski 🚳 SEGA Addictive as ever and beyond arcade-perfect.

CODEMASTERS A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound.

DiRT Showdown CODEMASTERS RACING Flamboyance without substance and

dumbed-down handling. Gymkhana rules. RECOMMENDED Driver: San Francisco REFLECTIONS The series returns to its roots and delivers superb action-adventure racing. A must get.

Dvad. A seizure-inducing, music-based blaster.

RECOMMENDED F12012 CODEMASTERS Has more variety and toe-in-the-water moments. Weird flag rules, though.

F1 Bace Stars CODEMASTERS RACING Tedious kart racer. No drifting, either.



**Gran Turismo 5** DEVELOPER: POLYPHIONY DIGITAL PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16

"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

RECOMMENDED LittleBigPlanet Karting UNITED FRONT GAMES Easier than ModNation but more loaded with opportunity to create. Lots of fun.

PlayStation Mad Riders TECHLAND Cheap ATV thrills in a crowded market.

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers UNITED FRONT GAMES Creating is even more fun than racing

MotoGP 10/11 6 MONUMENTAL GAMES Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

9

8

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift **EVOLUTION STUDIOS** Boasts splitscreen but feels old.

MotorStorm Apocalypse EVOLUTION STUDIOS The new locale lacks a little charm but the

racing is as fast and frantic as ever. MX vs. ATV Alive

RAINBOW STUDIOS A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since.

MUD - FIM Motocross World Championship BLACKBEANGAMES No-frills motocross racing.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 9 CRITERION GAMES Smooth and truly beautiful arcade racing

RECOMMENDED Need For Speed Most Wanted CRITERION

A fantastic open-world racer that needs to be online. Great multiplayer too.

Nail'd 7 TECHLAND Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID CODEMASTERS A born-to-rage racing rebel. A bit old, but the only other racer to have Mount Panorama.

Ridge Racer Unbounded BUGBEAR ENTERTAINMENT Woeful drifting, infuriating track design. Such a pity.

**SBK** Generations MILESTONE
Fairly similar to 2011 and X. Technical and

lovely but it's comparatively ugly.

6

#### index RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS Frantic racing with plenty of depth Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed 7 SUMO DIGITAL Tracks are great, the rest is okay. Pick Sonic. RECOMMENDED Split/Second 8 BLACK ROCK STUDIO Challenges Burnout but needed to be sharper WRC 3 6 MILESTONE Does the bare minimum. Stick with 2 or DiRT. Wrecked: Revenge Revisited SUPERSONIC SOFTWARE Absolute must-have for local-multi. **RPG/ACTION RPG** Alpha Protocol 5 OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT Great concept, poor execution RECOMMENDED Disgaea 4: A Promise Unforgotten NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE Very familiar for fans but still exciting. RECOMMENDED Dark Souls 8 FROM SOFTWARE Brutally, stupidly, gloriously hard. RECOMMENDED Darksiders II VIGIL GAMES Slicker, tougher and deeper than the first. RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II 8 BIOWARE A step forward and two back from Origins. RECOMMENDED Dragon's Dogma 8 A challenging and punishing action-RPG where 'action' isn't an afterthought. ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim 10 BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS Book holidays; you will need 300+ hours to discover everything this offers. RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT A great ride but you've been on it before RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII-2 8 SQUAREENIX Better; more freedom but still clunky in places. Hyperdimension Neptunia Mk2 5 IDEA FACTORY A truly unnecessary sequel. RECOMMENDED Kingdoms of Amalur: 8 Reckoning 38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGE GAMES A patchwork of everything that's great NEW & Registron Labyrinth Legends 6 CREAT STUDIOS Deceivingly cutesy, tougher than a black box. Laced with unforgiving puzzles and battles The Lord of the Rings: War in the North 7 SNOWBLIND STUDIOS Repetitive combat. Best in co-op \*\* RECOMMENDED Mass Effect BIOWARE Worth a purchase for its storytelling ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2 BIOWARE Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi



Rough and flavourless. Waves its fingers at

A mess. Send it down to Davy Jones' Locker.

Saccharine, yet enticing. Looks lovely.

Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

Wacky and weird. Japanophiles will dig it.

Sluggish and dated, like a zombie wearing flares.

An incomprehensibly awful Bond game and a

One of the best movie-inspired titles ever.

Single player blows, multiplayer's awesome.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2 8

A deeply dedicated online community but the

single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

2KMARIN/DIGITALEXTREMES/2KAUSTRALIA

Combat has been spliced to near-perfection.

5

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8

a

Soldier

ARKANESTUDIOS

TREYARCH

RPG conventions and pays for it.

WIZARBOX

Risen 2

DEEPSILVER

SEGA WOW

SEGA

Tales of Graces f

NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS

Valkyria Chronicles

Way of the Samurai 4

Yakuza: Dead Souls

SHOOTER

Aliens vs. Predator

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE

DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE

RECOMMENDED BioShock

IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN

Grown-up gaming at its best.

BROOMMINDED BioShock 2

really shoddy shooter in general

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS

RECOMMENDED Battlefield 3

007 Legends

gives out some pretty rare and sweet loot. That is the digital representation of a Borderlands fan called Michael Mamaril, who passed away due to cancer at age 22. Mamaril, along with one of his friends Carlo, was a huge fan of the game, and so Carlo asked Gearbox to write a eulogy for him. The studio more than obliged, and put him in the game, \*Sniff\*

So, you've played Borderlands 2 and you've found a NPC in Sanctuary who

Bulletstorm PEOPLE CAN FLY Inventive but is best towards the end. Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 INFINITY WARD Still worth playing for Spec-Ops alone. RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops II 9

Reinvents the multiplayer formula and has

the best solo campaign out of all CoDs. \* PayStation RECOMMENDED Counter-Strike: Global Offensive 8 VALVE The game from your misspent youth.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 2 CRYTEK Pretty and challenging. Tops the original.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness II 8 DIGITAL EXTREMES Gory, inventive, and fun, but pretty short. You need to play co-op for the full story, too

RECOMMENDED Deus Ex: Human Revolution 8 EIDOS MONTREAL

A flawed masterpiece that doesn't offer quite as much choice as you'd like. RECOMMENDED Dishonored

Anti-climatic, otherwise a bloody good romp DOOM 3 BFG Edition It hasn't aged well. A relic with cobwebs.

Family Guy: Back to the Multiverse HEAVY IRON STUDIOS Stay for the fanfare 'cos the game ain't good.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 3 UBISOFT MONTREAL Absolutely the best in the series and a new benchmark for open world shooters.

F.E.A.R. 3 6 Capable but unspectacular. Also, not scary RECOMMENDED Ghost Recon: Future

UBISOFT PARIS Beautiful tech and pacing, brilliant co-op Killzone HD 5 GUERILLA GAMES

RECOMMENDED Killzone 3 **GUERRILLA GAMES** Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline

Killzone before it was good. Easily missed.

Medal of Honor: Warfighter DANGERCLOSE Old hat. Buggy solo, and lacklustre multi.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge 8 EADIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE A true original and smartly designed.

: DITOWDER ODDINENS ODDING STREET Stranger's Wrath JUST ADD WATER A fun mish-mash of platforming and shooting.

RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint: Red River CODEMASTERS Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box EAUK/VALVE Get it for Portal, keep it for Half-Life 2. Derivative action but effortlessly compelling. Roque Warrior ZOMBIE STUDIOS/REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS A fiasco. The best bit is the end credits. RECOMMENDED Syndicate 9 STARBREEZE STUDIOS Stylish, and bountiful in co-op. Banned in Aus. RECOMMENDED Twisted Metal 8

8

RECOMMENDED Portal 2

RECOMMENDED Resistance 3

INSOMNIAC GAMES

**SPORTS** 

One of the most brilliant games, ever

Holds promise but the world feels empty

VALVE

RAGE

7

9

8

9

EAT SLEEP PLAY Fast, refreshing and tactical. Great online.

AFL Live BIGANT Does a decent job of things - just.



FIFA 13 DEVELOPER: EA CANADA PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22 "Inches closer and closer to the real thing. First Touch Controls are game- and genre-changing, and

there's a very healthy and complex online component too."

RECOMMENDED FIFA Street 6 EACANADA Attacking feels good but defending will make you cry. Needs more fun in the next update.

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion Refined controls, excellent story mode and

super-quick gameplay. Near perfect. London 2012 SEGA STUDIOS AUSTRALIA Waggle- and mash-tacular! Better in multi.

RECOMMENDED Madden NFL 13 EATIBURON Dodgy physics aside, this is the best the series has been.

8

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K13 VISUAL CONCEPTS One of NBA's finest moments vet. RECOMMENDED NBA Jam: On Fire

Edition EACANADA Loads of fun. For \$20 you're mad not to get it.

RECOMMENDED Pro Evolution Soccer 20138 KONAMI Does lots of things differently to FIFA and it's

doing them bloody well. Rugby League Live 2 6 BIG ANT STUDIOS Fixes some of Live's problems but it feels

crude. For die-hards only, RECOMMENDED Skate 3 EA BLACK BOX Better in many ways, though we'd stick with

the madness of Skate 2. 7 EACANADA Labyrinthine courses mean plenty to do, but you might get lost on the way.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13 EATIBURON Great golf game but you'll always need to be online to truly progress. Got 12? Stick with it.

**Borderlands 2** DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE DISTRIBUTOR: 2K PLAYERS: 1 - 4 "Wild, clever and overflowing with clever nods and moments. More cohesive than its predecessor and addictive too, with loads of DLC

10

you'll want to care about incoming. Rewards nultiple playthroughs. especially in co-op." Brink SPLASH DAMAGE

solo experience. RECOMMENDED Brother's in Arms: Hell's Highway GEARBOX SOFTWARE The most authentic WWII shooter ever made

Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 3

One-ups its impressive predecessor.

humour. Technically woeful, too.

Big, beautiful and addictive. Buy it.

to their A Game of Thrones cash-in.

RECOMMENDED Ni No Kuni

An uninspired JRPG with a dirty sense of

Unrefined but a bloody good effort compared

BIOWARE

LEVEL 5

CYANIIDE

Mugen Souls

COMPILE HEART

Of Orcs and Men



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD BUBUMUDU Skimpy. Lacks content and no splitscreen. RECOMMENDED Top Spin 4 Still the best tennis sim with a DualShock RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 3 YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS If you 'get' the sport you need this. RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 4 8 SUMO DIGITAL Superb Move controls and supremely pretty. STRATEGY RECOMMENDED Anomaly Warzone Earth 11 BIT STUDIOS Tower offence and it's excellent. Also, co-op. Markovi Awesomenauts 7 There's no such thing as a quick game in this MOBA. A real slog at times. RECOMMENDED From Dust UBISOFT MONTPELLIER Creative and engaging god-game NEW PROPERTY RECOMMENDED Guardians of Middle-earth MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS Unfair at first, unusually compelling later. NEW Ratchet & Clank: Q-Force 6 INSOMNIAC GAMES Comes alive in co-op, but the online audience needs to swell for this to succeed. \* New Worms Revolution TEAM 17 Genuine new ideas but feels a little muddied RECOMMENDED XCOM: Enemy Unknown 8 Fantastic concept and very engrossing **PS VITA** PayStation Alien Breed TEAM 17 Later levels get better but it's not enough. RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed III Liberation UBISOFT SOFIA A must play, and a system seller. Call of Duty: Black Ops Declassified NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE

Dross. A third-rate effort in solo and multi. PayStation Chronovolt 6 PLAYERTHREE Camera issues make a stressful Monkey Ball. RECOMMENDED Everybody's Golf 8 CLAPHANZ Excellent physics. Even though it's pukeworthy cute, you won't be disappointed. RECOMMENDED FIFA Football FIFA 12, tweaked, and in your hands. Superb. RECOMMENDED Gravity Rush JAPAN STUDIO Stylish free-roaming action RPG LEGO Lord of the Rings TRAVELER'S TALES A poor port with age-old combat mechanics. LittleBigPlanet PS Vita DOUBLE ELEVEN It's LBP as you know it (good!), but the touchscreen stuff gets in the way (bad!).

RECOMMENDED Lumines: Electronic

RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD

Hypnotic and addictive music-based puzzler

Symphony

Collection

DENTERTAINMENT

with new twists. Must get.

KONAMI/BLUEPOINT GAMES

A so-so port of excellent games.

Modnation Racers: Road Trip SONVSANDIEGO Much to do and create but no online multi. RECOMMENDED Mortal Kombat 8 NETHERREALM NZ only, which is a shame because like the PS3 version its guilty, bloody, fun. RECOMMENDED MotorStorm RC 8 EVOLUTION STUDIOS Holy hamburgers, this is addictive stuff. RECOMMENDED Need For Speed Most 8 Very similar to its big brother. The best racer on PS Vita by far. \*\* New Little King's Story 6 MINDSCAPE Lacking polish, but not technical issues. Playstation All-Stars Battle Royale 7 BLUEPOINTGAMES Everything its console counterpart is. It's free if you already own it on PS3. RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins 8 UBISOFT MONTPELLIER Utterly gorgeous platformer. Solo play only Shinobido 2: Revenge of Zen 6 ACQUIRE Technical issues and a weird camera system tarnishes a cool action game. Silent Hill: Book of Memories 7 WAYFORWARD TECHNOLOGIES Diablo meets Silent Hill. Ok, but strange Sixty Second Shooter Deluxe HAPPION LABORATORIES Twin stick blaster for the time poor NEW Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed 7 SUMO DIGITAL Loses little apart from split-screen. Good fun! Smart As 6 XDEV An ordinary by-the-books brain trainer 5 TTFUSION Ok car combat with a forgettable campaign. RECOMMENDED Street Fighter X Tekken NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS A perfect rendition of the PS3 version. Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz 7 AMUSEMENT VISION
Reminiscent of its brutal beginnings. RECOMMENDED Super Stardust Delta HOUSEMARQUE Cheap. Fun. Ridiculously pretty. Must get. RECOMMENDED Tales From Space: Mutant Blobs Attack! DRINKBOXSTUDIOS A really clever platformer. Touch My Katamari 5 NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS Disappointing. Bereft of the usual charm. RECOMMENDED Ultimate Marvel vs. 9 Capcom 3

Accessible to everyone and very pretty NEW Uncharted: Fight for Fortune 7 A card trading game (no, really) that ties into the blissful Golden Abyss. Cheap, though. RECOMMENDED Uncharted: Golden Abyss 9 SONYBEND A card trading game (no, really) that ties into Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour

It's the PS3 game, but on Vita, which is really

quite good. Only worth buying once, though.

A very pretty robust racer; true to the series.

RECOMMENDED Zero Escape: Virtue's Last

RECOMMENDED WipEout 2048

A superbly written adventure.

STUDIO LIVERPOOL

SPIKE CHUNSOFT

## infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

## 2000

# Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

CONSOLE: PS ONE GENRE: SPORTS DEVELOPER: NEVERSOFT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: US CURRENT PRICE: \$20 (EBAY) \$12.25 (PSN HD COMPILATION)



n 1999 Activision released a skateboarding game that would tap into a largely untouched market: angry and rebellious skateboarders. Featuring innovative gameplay, incredible level design, an exceptional control scheme and a stellar soundtrack it enjoyed critical

The original Tony Hawk helped bring terms such as the heelflip and indy nosebone into the common vocabulary, or rather the common gamer's vocabulary. After skirting back to their dev den to work on a sequel Activision re-emerged a year later and presented their newest jewel, Pro Skater 2.

To say that the offspring was great is a severe understatement. Not only does it maintain a 98% Metacritic rating (seriously) but it also went on to win numerous game of the year awards. More than just a system seller, this PS One classic existed in a time when bigger often did mean better.

So what made it so great? It was a complete package, a fastpaced, good-looking game that transcended sports and platform games, being incredibly technical but also accessible. For many it was as addictive as chocolate tobacco. With bigger levels, more tricks and double the number of goals as its predecessor, this was a game that screamed for a 100% completion rate If secrets were your thing you were spoilt rotten with hidden levels and cheats enabling moon physics, a big head and a slow motion mode.

Tricks could be bought. characters made, there was even a skatepark editor! And who could forget the soundtrack - Millencolin's 'No Cigar', Naughty by Nature's 'Pin the Tail on the Donkey' and Rage Against the Machine's 'Guerilla Radio'. The rock, punk and hip hop tunes were designed to get you in the mood for the destruction of public and private property via your four-wheeled weapon of carnage, and it inspired other games to do better with their soundtracks.

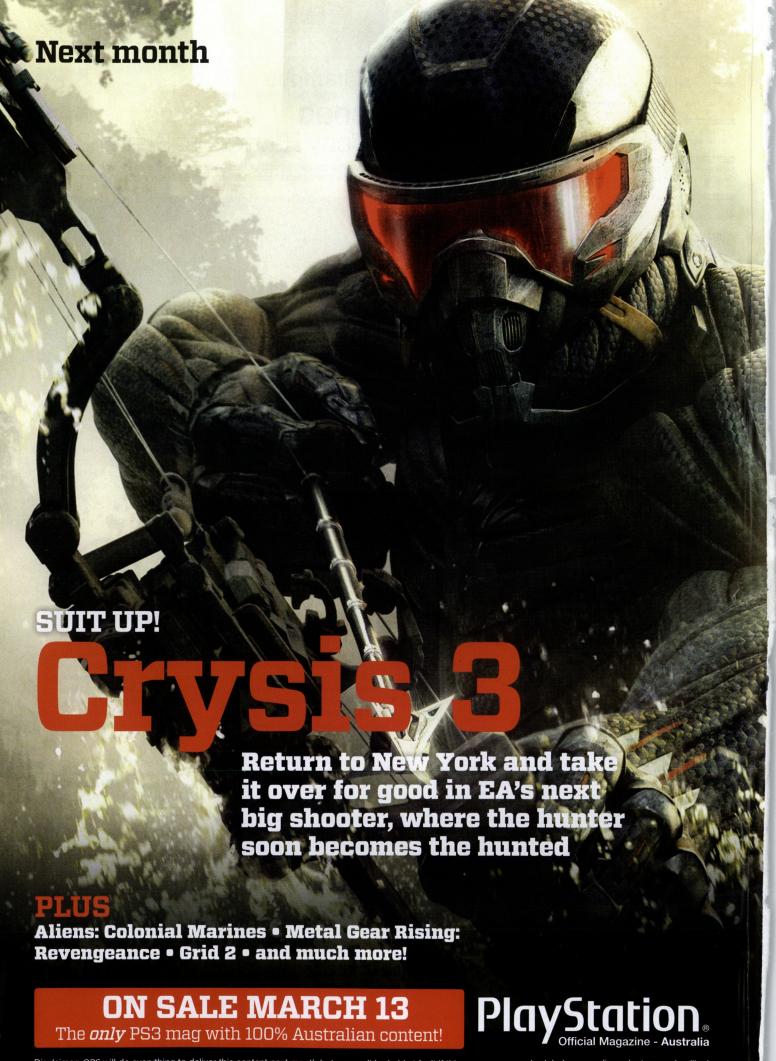
But without a doubt Pro Skater 2's biggest addition was the manual. a move which enabled gamers to string together combos that would be otherwise impossible. Previously combos could only be built by jumping from rail to rail or in the air but with Pro Skater 2 these moves could all be linked together. The result was an incredibly versatile and satisfying game mechanic, arguably the core element in all skateboarding titles released since.

Not without a sense of humour the game featured the now infamous Officer Dick, an unlockable character that appeared in each of the Tony Hawk sequels. His biography read "As a youth, poor Richard Envee was deemed as a poser by other skaters. Distraught and overtaken by the need for revenge. Dick vowed to some day become what those skaters feared most... the long arm of the law!" Though we believe the developers intended him to be the long third leg of the law.

Not to be outdone was Ollie the Magic Bum, a homeless man who appeared in the Venice Beach level. One of the game's missions was to ollie over Ollie as he magically teleported from one spot to another. He later appeared in Tony Hawk Pro Skater 3 as a playable character sporting a board made from nailed together wooden. planks. A Martin Gladstone

#### CAMEO CENTRAL

If ever there was a franchise that embodied the disastrous effects of milking a successful series, Tony Hawk's is it. The first four



Disclaimer: OPS will do everything to deliver this content next month but we can't be held at fault if things go awry or scheduled games slip and miss our deadline!



# GODOFWAR

THE LEGEND BEGINS
14.03.13

Check the Classification







